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A CHEQUERED LIFE.

A CHEQUERED LIFE:

BEING MEMOIRS OF THE

VICOMTESSE DE LÉOVILLE-MEILHAN.

EDITED BY

THE VICOMTESSE SOLANGE DE KERKADEC.

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DEDICATED,

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TO

THE LADY JULIANA WALKER.

A CHEQUERED LIFE:

BEING MEMOIRS OF THE

VICOMTESSE DE LÉOVILLE-MEILHAN.

FIRST PART.

IF not the happiest, certainly the quietest years of my life, were spent at the Imperial House of Ecouen, of which the excellent and gifted Madame Campan was the "Surintendante." A large number of ladies shared with her the care of about six hundred of the daughters of the Emperor's officers. Several of these ladies were called "Dames Dignitaires," and were next in power to Madame Campan; the others ranked according to their different duties; but all of them were entirely devoted to us, and they were all called "Maman." To the orphans (the majority of the inmates) the title recalled to mind, though but imperfectly, the dear ones who were gone to their eternal rest.

Although kept rather strictly, we led a very contented life in the Château d'Ecouen, which had lost a little of its pristine splendour in being converted into a school; nevertheless, those who were endowed with romantic imaginations created fanciful pictures of the past, which brightened the "causeries" during the recreations, and while roaming under the old trees, which afforded so delightful a shade in the bright warm days of summer. They lent also an exquisite charm to our waking dreams, when we were shut up in the long dormitories, before sleep came to close our eyelids; and carried us away into unknown regions, till we fell into happy slumbers, from which we were only disturbed by the morning bell calling us to the usual routine of the day.

Our grandest and liveliest days were when the Emperor came to visit us, accompanied by a brilliant staff. He delighted in finding himself surrounded by us, and would not allow us to be checked in our somewhat loud demonstrations of delight, and even in our attempts at taking liberties with his Majesty; such as kissing his hands, stealing his pocket-handkerchief, and cutting it into infinitesimal portions, which were distributed among the merry crowd; even his coat often suffered in a similar way. He would laugh and applaud us, almost scolding the "Dames Dignitaires" if they attempted to interfere.

Murat (the exquisite, but unfortunate King of Naples, so treacherously sold by the man who was conveying him into exile) had a share of the ad-

miration of some of us, only it was silent and reserved; for it would have been quite against "les convenances" to behave otherwise.

To the elder girls those visits were a source of much happiness, as there was always the possibility of some of the officers of the suite falling in love with one of them; in fact, his Majesty's wish was to marry his adopted daughters to his favourites, giving to each girl in every instance a small dowry; for many among us being orphans, were often without fortune.

I was just seventeen when, for the third time since I was at Ecouen, I had the honour of speaking to Bonaparte. It was during the working hour, and his Majesty as he passed me stopped and asked in rather a brusque manner, how many needlefuls of thread would be necessary to complete the work in my hands.

"One, sire," I replied immediately, "if it were long enough."

The Emperor smiled, and turning significantly to one of the officers near him, passed on.

"Your words will not be forgotten," whispered my great friend, Mademoiselle Anaïs de Champigny; "his Majesty's look means—first, a present; second, a dowry; and third, a husband."

I did not care for the two last-named, but secretly I hoped that Anaïs' words would come true, as to the first. A week afterwards, I was summoned to the presence of Madame Campan, who, opening a small box, presented me with a watch and chain, sent to me from the Emperor. I could scarcely

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height of the greensward which kissed its brink. Here I felt a quiet content, which enabled me to return to my post with a cheerful face and a greater readiness to devote myself to the man who wished for my happiness, but who could not have made happy a more impressionionable nature than mine. It was lucky that love was unknown to me, for Colonel de Ferval had for me a sort of paternal affection, which feeling alone I returned. Had I experienced any stronger sentiment, I should have found a heart insensible to love; a hand in which mine would have become cold for want of a warm pressure; kisses would have been extinguished upon icy lips that had never breathed a sigh—at least, for me.

Thus my monotonous days ran on, till Colonel de Ferval, finding himself much worse, asked me to write to a very intimate friend of his, a man of very large fortune, who, from kindness of heart, practised medicine for the sake of suffering humanity. I had seen him at my wedding, and he had never come near us since. My husband spoke of him in the highest terms, and was most eager he should come to us now.

I felt glad at the thought of having some friend in the house, especially when I saw how changed Colonel de Ferval was. After a few days Dr. Joinville arrived. He was some years younger than my husband; he had a handsome face, but unfortunately he was lame and immensely stout; however,

the benign expression depicted on his every feature made one forget these defects. I soon found him a most agreeable companion; my conversations with my husband hitherto had been of the most commonplace nature,—not but that he was excessively clever, but probably because he looked upon me almost as he would upon a child, unused to the world, and probably also on account of his weakness, which made him avoid much talking.

Dr. Joinville devoted most of his time to the Colonel during the day, but when the latter was asleep, he did all in his power to unfold my thoughts by clever remarks, which required answers I felt almost too bashful to give. Little by little I became more free with him, and he at last won all my friendship, as well as my confidence. His respectful deference on all points made me look at myself in a new light; I no longer felt I could not give an opinion, and the change was soon remarked by my husband, who seemed pleased at it.

"Mathilde," he said to me one day, "I fear I never did you justice; I always used to fancy you were a child, and I never took the trouble of developing in you what I see Joinville has brought to light. I fear you have not been as happy as I intended you should be; but forgive me; I shall leave this world, and may you find, in a year or two hence, a more congenial helpmate than I have been! I leave you all my fortune, which Joinville will help you to administer. Keep him always as

your best friend, for of all the men I have known, none can come up to him; and now, Mathilde . . ."

But the words died on his lips; a few drops of blood trickled down from his mouth; he gasped for breath, and all was over.

Dr. Joinville, after allowing me to imprint a kiss on the pale forehead of my husband, took my arm and conducted me to my little boudoir, where I was left undisturbed for the rest of the evening.

The next morning we met at breakfast. I looked pale and tired; I had not slept all night. My sorrow certainly was a very quiet one; I regretted my husband, for he had always been most kind, and, although I could not weep as I should have done for one differently loved, I felt, at the same time, that I was once more left without a protector,—I was then barely nineteen.

Dr. Joinville superintended everything, and a week after the arrangements were concluded, I left the Château for Blois, where at that time my sister-in-law resided. Dr. Joinville had persuaded me to pay a visit to her; she had never been very friendly with her brother, but the Doctor thought I owed it to the memory of the Colonel, to try and prove that ill feelings had never existed on his part. Then he thought that, being himself an inhabitant of the place, he would be able to see more of me and advise me when necessary. I should have much preferred going to my great-aunt. I knew Mademoiselle de Ferval was rather eccentric, and I feared it would be a difficult task for me to live happily with her; I was, how-

ever, overruled by Dr. Joinville, who wished me to give it a trial, and I went.

The house inhabited by Mademoiselle de Ferval was in the "Haute Ville," built between court and garden, as most of the good houses were. But if the outside were insignificant, nothing could have surpassed the elegance and magnificence of the interior; it was a fairy palace, but, alas! for its occupant. I had never seen anything so perfectly ugly as Mademoiselle de Ferval. Though Dr. Joinville had prepared me for it, I had much trouble in refraining from uttering a cry of dismay; she probably perceived it; but, with the greatest tact and the most graceful manner, she received me as if nothing were the matter.

"You are welcome, my dear Mathilde," she said, kissing me. "I had longed to make your acquaintance, but regret, nevertheless, that it should be under such melancholy auspices. I feel grateful for your having acquiesced in the proposal of our dear Doctor, for I feel at times very lonely, and it will be delightful to me to have such a companion as yourself."

I fear I appeared very cold; however, Dr. Joinville talked of my being tired, and, as it was late in the evening, I retired to the apartment that had been prepared for me.

I remember well how I dreamt I was in a beautiful garden, with Dr. Joinville, walking and admiring the lovely flowers; then coming to a rose-tree and plucking a rose-bud, the only one on the tree, I gave it to Dr. Joinville to carry to my husband; then the former

disappeared, and I was left face to face with a hideous monster, whose head was that of Mademoiselle de Ferval; I uttered a scream and awoke.

I suppose the tale of the Beauty and the Beast, which had haunted me before going to bed, had caused this nightmare.

The next morning I met my sister-in-law in the breakfast-room; she talked principally of her brother. When our meal was ended, she took me all over the house: everything was in the most perfect taste, greatly surpassing, indeed, that of her brother, which I used to think so good, before seeing Amélie's house. She begged me to be entirely my own mistress, and not to mind her; she seldom went out, but the carriage would be always at my command when I felt inclined for a drive. Mademoiselle de Ferval visited very few people; and after giving a detail of her daily occupations, the hours of meals, etc., she left me to my own devices.

Amélie had not adopted the fashions of the Empire, and, although she appeared a little singular, her dress was far more elegant than the then prevalent style. Royalist to her heart's core, she detested the very sound of Bonaparte's name. It was a most unfortunate thing, as I was as staunch a Bonapartist as she was a Royalist; however, her good breeding prevented her abusing him before me, though she never refrained from talking of the Royal family, with the Doctor and two of her neighbours, who deserve a few words of description.

The old Marquis de Mergis and his sister lived in the next house to that of Mademoiselle de Ferval; the gardens were only separated by very high trellis-work, thickly covered with creepers; and from my window I was able, not only to see my neighbours, but also to hear their conversation, which at times was rather stormy. The old Marquis, who had been one of the beaux of Louis XV.'s reign, was then a sort of bundle impossible to make out well, at a distance. His sister, like Mademoiselle de Ferval, had preserved the dress of the court of Louis the beloved; unfortunately, old as she was, it did not quite suit her; and it was always so shabby that I could not imagine how any woman, of whatever rank or age, could have neglected herself so much.

The first time the Marquis called after my arrival, Amélie introduced us, and it was all I could do to refrain from laughing. Wrapped up in a very old silk dressing-gown, much the worse for wear, and a black silk nightcap on his head, he made the most ridiculous figure imaginable. His features, which were very small, seemed to have shrivelled into nothing. But, if old in his looks, he was not so in manners, and I, who was unaccustomed to the courtly graces and affectations of the beaux of the last reigns, thought it all so comical that I was obliged to leave the room soon after his appearance. When he was gone, Mademoiselle de Ferval begged me to be less childish, especially as he would often come to play at cards, in the evenings, with his sister.

Little by little a change came over M. de Mergis: the nightcap was discarded first, then the dressing-gown, and at last one evening he appeared in Court costume! When he went away that night, Amélie said to me,—"Do you know, Mathilde, that you have made a conquest? The Marquis is desperately in love with you! For the last ten years he has never appeared in anything else but his silk dressing-gown; you may depend on it in a few days he will offer you his hand."

I burst out laughing at the prediction; nevertheless, it was verified, and two days afterwards M. de Mergis, more elegant and more courtly than ever, entered the summer drawing-room, and kneeling before me, offered me his heart and his hand with the most passionate expressions of love. Being somewhat prepared, I did not feel inclined to laugh, and thanked him gravely for the honour he was doing me; but I told him that not for years to come should I ever think of marrying again.

The Marquis seemed a little confused, but Amélie entering the room put an end to the somewhat embarrassing interview. From that day he left off his courtly garb, and appeared afterwards as the bundle of former times.

His anecdotes were excessively entertaining, although I could see he was always careful to avoid anything that could have shocked me, notwithstanding his love of all that was a little immoral; which at least was imputed to him by Mademoiselle de Ferval.

He evinced always much respect for the Queen Marie Leczinska, whom he rather pitied than otherwise, and he burst into invectives against Madame de Prie, whose want of delicacy, in offering the presents of the King to the young Princess (when in extreme distress), tended to humiliate her to the last degree.

Six months after my arrival at Blois, I heard that my great-aunt was very ill; and after consulting Amélie and Dr. Joinville, I made arrangements to leave for that place; the Doctor was to accompany me. Although Mademoiselle de Ferval had been most amiable to me, and seemed to like my being with her, she showed no regret when my departure was spoken of; the fact being that she was deeply in love with Dr. Joinville.

I should never have known anything of it, had I not overheard her maid and mine talking together on the subject. Each of them pretended he had told her he was in love with me, and therefore my departure seemed a godsend to her. I did not believe in their assertion, though, as I found out afterwards, it was true.

What a change for me! what a contrast to the life I had been accustomed to, was that which I was to lead with Mademoiselle Aymar and her old servant Fanchette! I had left my maid behind me at the express request of my aunt, and well was it I did so. I could fall into the ways of the house at once; but I am sure that Célestine, nice as she was,

could not have put up with my aunt's "ménage," after the life of luxury she had led both at Mademoiselle de Ferval's and at the Château de Bransac.

To old Fanchette I was still Mademoiselle Mathilde, and she treated me in the same manner as when I left her to go to the Imperial House of Ecouen. My little bedroom, with its whitewashed walls and dimity curtains, was the same,—nothing had been changed; it felt cold and cheerless after my beautiful apartments at Blois.

Dr. Joinville prescribed for Mademoiselle Aymar, and the next day he left us. I was sorry, and yet glad at his departure. I saw that the maids had not been mistaken; and, as nothing more than great friendship could ever exist in my heart for him, I thought it was best we should be separated a while.

My aunt, though very feeble, was more lively than I could have expected; only I had become a little more romantic latterly, and was always glad when I could escape and take a walk, even in the flat and uninteresting country around us. The house was completely isolated; a few vineyards formed the background, and in front a small garden, badly cultivated, led to the road, lined with straight poplars, which looked like giants in the moonlight.

I had to walk three miles to go to church, and I very well remember how short those three miles appeared to me the second Sunday I went there. In a pew belonging to the Château of Beaupré sat a man whose eyes I felt were never off me. He was tall,

dark, with eyes which seemed to pierce you through and through, and he had the air of a man of the world. In leaving church I met him at the door, near the "bénitier;" he dipped his gloved fingers in it and offered them to me; I touched them, and made the sign of the cross, then slightly bowing, I turned into the road leading to my aunt's house.

His face haunted me all the way; not that I very much admired it, but probably because my mind wanted occupation. I was more lively than usual that day, and my aunt remarking it, prevented my asking her who was the stranger I had seen.

The next day, as I sat at my open window, a sportsman followed by dogs crossed our vineyard; he looked up, lifted his hat, I bowed in return, and soon he was lost to my gaze. Towards evening I went out; the atmosphere was unusually sultry; and, without much caring where I went, I took the first path that offered itself, diverging from the main road, and walking, till presently I perceived the horizon getting darker and darker, the leaden clouds chasing one another and forming in masses more dense than I had ever seen them in my life. Flashes of lightning began to part them in furrows; the thunder roared, and torrents of rain poured as if all the sluices of heaven had opened their gates to submerge the world. I must own I felt frightened, and wished some one would come in sight.

On looking round I saw a dilapidated hut, and ran to it for shelter. It was empty, and the water had

already invaded it. A piece of wood large enough to hold my feet served me for a pedestal, and leaning against the wall I waited until the warring of the elements should be over, before I ventured out. Not five minutes had elapsed when dogs bounded in, and a man entered, following them. At first he did not see me, but on one of the dogs barking, he turned and perceived the frightened statue against the wall. He bowed silently, and called his dogs away, remaining himself at the door to watch the grand spectacle I was afraid to look at. More than half an hour passed away, and at last the rain ceased.

"Madame," said he, advancing towards me, "you are far from home; the roads are now in a dreadful state: may I offer to escort you? It is now late, and you should not go unprotected."

"I fear it will be giving you much trouble," I replied, "but as I am not very brave, I willingly accept your offer."

We started, his dogs bounding before us, and I feeling excessively awkward. We walked without speaking until we arrived at a spot where we heard a splashing. The dogs were fording a deep ravine made by the torrents of rain. I had crossed the spot in coming, and it was then perfectly dry.

There was a position to find myself in! My companion looked at me and said:—

"There is no alternative for you, Madame; you must allow me to carry you across."

I suppose I looked rather dismayed; but after a

second, I knew I could not do otherwise than allow him to carry me as he would have done a child. When we were on safe ground I thanked him; he bowed without uttering a word, and we continued our way, but not quite so silently as heretofore. We spoke about the ugliness and dullness of the place, and at last we arrived at my aunt's "maisonnette."

"You are so wet," I said: "will you not come in?"

"A thousand thanks, Madame, but I had better at once return to Beaupré. I must ford the ravine again, and therefore it is useless to attempt to get my clothes dried now. I sincerely hope you will not find yourself the worse for your disagreeable walk."

And without waiting any longer, he bowed and was gone.

Fanchette was looking out, and my aunt was in a dreadful fright, but when they saw me safe and lively their terrors ceased, and I had to relate my adventure, not, however, before I had drank some famous cordial of Fanchette's making.

The next day my unknown knight called to inquire after my health, and old Fanchette—who took a fancy to him—insisted on his coming in. He made himself so agreeable to Mademoiselle Aymar, that she actually asked him to come and play piquet with her when he had nothing better to do; he accepted the invitation, and became almost a daily visitor.

"You have never asked me my name," said he once to my aunt, "or why I live in this wild sort of way. I think I may feel sure that my secret will be

faithfully kept, and I will therefore divulge to you that by the orders of Bonaparte I was sentenced to be exiled, for having spoken too frankly on the subject of the Court of the Tuileries; but I managed to escape, and came here unknown to any one, except my cousin, the Baron de Meilhan, who has given me permission to take up my abode at Beaupré. My name is De Belfonds; and, although I know you are both staunch Bonapartists, I am certain you will not betray me."

My aunt and I promised to keep his secret religiously.

Two months elapsed in perfect intimacy; and one afternoon, to our great surprise and regret, Monsieur de Belfonds came to bid us farewell. Through the intercession of some friend he had been forgiven, and was returning to Paris, where, he said, he hoped some day to renew our acquaintance. We all missed him, Fanchette included, for he was kindly disposed, and a gentleman in every sense of the word.

My life became infinitely more tedious than it had been before, and I made up my mind to change my mode of living, by thinking more of others than I had hitherto done, and by following the example of the two good old women I was living with. My aunt, with her very limited means, did much good; I, with my large ones, did nothing; that is to say, I would give any amount of money that was asked of me; but in that, following Mademoiselle de Ferval's ways, I never inquired where and

how I could do good. With her, however, it was ostentation—with me, carelessness and indifference; not that I was devoid of kindly feelings, but they had not been properly developed.

I therefore went to the old curé, and told him how much I wished to do something for the poor peasants, and he encouraged me to visit all his parishioners. They were not exactly poor, because their wants were so few; still, I could do a vast amount among them, and I soon found how pleasant it was to help one's fellow-creatures. To one I would give a cow, to another a vineyard, buy a piece of ground for another to cultivate, and so on. Their gratefulness was very great, and repaid me amply for the little I had done; but, as the old curé had said,—

"Do not make them rich, for then they would be wretched; only give them enough to enable them to live honestly by their work, for idleness would engender all sorts of vices, which are as yet unknown in this place."

I also portioned several young girls at their marriage; furnished their cottages, giving them thus the means of beginning life in a tolerably prosperous manner; and on leaving the country, I left to the old priest an annuity, to endow one or two couples every year, as the case might be.

Thus engaged in visiting the peasants, I spent a more happy time; it was not, however, of long duration; my aunt, whose health had been getting worse every day, was found, one morning, dead in her bed,

I wrote immediately to Dr. Joinville, and a week elapsed without hearing from him; so the painful duties of seeing about the funeral of my aunt devolved upon me.

Mademoiselle Aymar had been buried ten days, and on the eve of the eleventh a post-chaise drove up and the doctor alighted from it. He looked dreadfully ill, and told me he had just returned from taking Mademoiselle de Ferval to a watering-place in the south. She was very ill; and he had come to fetch me to go and see her. There was nothing to prevent my doing so, and leaving the cottage to old Fanchette, with my aunt's income, I bade her and my pensioners farewell, and started with Dr. Joinville.

I found my sister-in-law in a dreadful state,—dying of love, as her maid told me, for the doctor. Poor Amélie!—she positively terrified me. As long as one could see the graceful movements of her elegant figure, the ugliness of her face was less apparent; but on seeing that terrible head on pillows trimmed with rich lace—the latter making it look still more frightful—I experienced a sort of vague terror of which I could scarcely divest myself. She very soon held me in the greatest aversion; for she became delirious, and in her frantic moments accused me of having robbed her of the heart of Dr. Joinville; and at last she died without recovering consciousness.

Soon after her demise I set off for the Château

de Bransac, where I meant to remain for a year, accompanied by the doctor, who acted still as a sort of guardian to me. Mademoiselle de Ferval had left me all her property and money, with the exception of legacies to her servants and a large sum to buy a present for Dr. Joinville; and I was, I suppose, as rich as any one could wish to be.

I found the apartments of M. de Ferval in the same state as when I had left Bransac immediately after his death; and, as soon as my visitor was gone, I went to my late husband's study, a room in which I had never been before, for it was invariably locked, and he had always begged of me never to disturb him when in it. I unlocked the door, not without a slight tremor, and opened the shutters, thus letting a flood of sunshine into the room, which allowed me to gaze at its contents. My eyes soon remained rivetted upon a full-length picture; it was that of a beautiful woman, holding in her hand a miniature of M. de Ferval. Several boxes were in the room; the first I opened contained letters, evidently from the lady whose portrait was before me. They all breathed a most devoted love, which I could never have thought M. de Ferval capable of inspiring. I longed to see Dr. Joinville again, to ask him for an explanation. However, it was only when I went to Paris to take possession of the pretty little Hôtel de la Fère that I met my old friend. He told me that the lady of the picture was an illegitimate daughter of some very high personage, whom

he would not name, and who had refused his consent to her marrying M. de Ferval on account of his serving under the Emperor; and in her despair the young girl had entered a convent.

Dr. Joinville burnt all the letters without reading them, his sense of honour would not allow him to do so; and I own it was a reproof to me, which made me blush, for not having respected the secret of the fair unknown.

On that same day Dr. Joinville declared his love to me. I was wretched at refusing that best of all men, but my heart was very different then to what it had been when I married Colonel de Ferval. I dreamt of other happiness than that of the prosaic friendship I had had for my late husband; and though loving no one then, I felt that soon I too should experience what I gradually began to think must be the happiest moments in a woman's life. Dr. Joinville left me sorrowful, but promising that my refusal should in no way alter our old relations together.

During the first eighteen months of my widowhood I lived almost in retirement, receiving only a few visitors. I was very awkwardly placed: the friends of Colonel de Ferval were all Royalists,—I was a Bonapartist; and little by little the noble ladies of the Faubourg St Germain refrained from taking the slightest notice of me.

Very desirous of seeing the amiable Madame Campan once more, I took a journey to Ecouen, where I was received with great kindness by all the ladies of the establishment and a few of the girls I

had known. I had sent before me sweetmeats and cakes in abundance, which were to be distributed at the collation; I knew by experience what pleasure it was in my time to get anything of the sort.

Scarcely had the distribution been made, when the sound of carriages was heard; cries of "Vive l'Impératrice!" resounded in the first class, which I had just left. I returned to it, and saw, advancing a few steps before her "dames d'honneur," the good and graceful Joséphine. Madame Campan presented me to her Majesty, who kindly inquired where I resided, saying: —"I remember well your name, Madame, before you married, and it was I who chose the watch and chain the Emperor sent you after your 'bon-mot;' I will not forget to mention you to his Majesty this evening, and I hope to meet you again soon at the Tuileries."

I curtsied profoundly, and Joséphine passed on to the different classes, which were entirely separated from one another.

A holiday had been granted by the Empress for the next day, and I was allowed to remain to spend it with some of my old companions and some of the ladies with whom I had been a favourite.

The week was scarcely over when I received an order to appear at Court. Anaïs de Champigny—my old friend who had prophesied a present from the Emperor to me—was married to an aide-de-camp of Maréchal Junot d'Abrantès, who introduced me to his wife, the Duchesse, one of the greatest ornaments of the Imperial Court—which I am sorry to say was not

altogether very select, but Madame d'Abrantès was an exception; nothing could exceed the charm of her manners, and being very witty and clever, she was a great favourite with Napoleon.

The great day arrived, and in all the display of Court dress I was presented to their Majesties.

Among those members of the Imperial family who were present, the young Queen Hortense and her brother Eugène de Beauharnais interested me most. The Princess Borghese, a very fine woman—whose reputation was not of the best—with her sister, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, also struck me, but not with the same interest as I felt for the children of Joséphine.

The presentations over, we all passed to the ball-room. Soon the Emperor came where I sat with the Duchesse d'Abrantès, and spoke to us both for some time, then left us to go and have a chat with Madame la Maréchale Lefèvre, who was one of the most vulgar women at Court; but Bonaparte made a point of being extremely civil to the wives of the men to whom he partly owed his success in the wars he waged with the world.

I remember hearing that very same evening a story about Madame Lefèvre, which amused me very much.

That lady was going over a very grand hotel that her husband intended to buy, and, coming to a room lined with bookcases, she asked the concierge what they were for?

"For books, Madame la Maréchale."

"For books, did you say? Ah bien, mon mari n'est pas liseur, moi je ne suis pas lisarde, donc j'en ferai mon fruitier."

The anecdotes about her were most laughable, but often too vulgar to be repeated.

The Prince Eugène danced with me, and then led me to the Empress, who was most affable, and expressed her wish to see me soon again.

In the throng, and to my infinite surprise, I perceived my old acquaintance from Beaupré; he came to me and begged to be allowed to call upon me, which I immediately granted, and after dancing once more I left the Tuileries.

From that day I became very intimate with Mme. d'Abrantès, and went often to Court, where I learnt to love more and more the charming Joséphine, who was so soon to disappear from the gay scenes of the Palace of the Tuileries, to be replaced by one who could never come up to her either in grace or kindness; for Marie Louise was the antipodes to Joséphine.

A few days after my presentation, M. de Belfonds paid me a visit, accompanied by his cousin, the Baron de Meilhan. I laughed much at the former for being at the Tuileries; and he confessed that a young Court beauty had led him to this unseemly conduct. He had obtained an entry at Court, notwithstanding his delinquencies against Bonaparte, who was only too glad to have ever so small a sprinkling from the noble Faubourg.

M. de Meilhan made a most favourable impression upon me; he was not strikingly handsome, but appeared to me to unite all the qualities that could make one happy; and for the first time in my life I loved.

His visits became very frequent; I found him such as I had pictured him to my mind in our first interview; and at the expiration of the two years of my widowhood, I became the happy Madame de Meilhan.

SECOND PART.

SOON after our marriage, M. de Meilhan proposed we should go to Beaupré. He feared to annoy and displease his mother by allowing me to go to the Tuileries; and, although I regretted leaving Paris without seeing the Emperor and Empress, I made no objection to his plans,—I was far too happy not to accede to his wishes, which were law to me.

On the eve of our departure, I received news of Doctor Joinville's death: it was unexpected, and the sudden blow struck me with an indescribable feeling of sorrowful pity, for I knew how much he had loved me.

It was a summer evening when we arrived at Beaupré; one of those warm, balmy, still evenings, that invite one to a sense of delightful peace, and wake loving hearts to the purest and sweetest communion with each other. We are, I believe, created for love, and we feel our real existence only from the day we are conscious of it. The most supreme and most complete happiness to which the soul of a living being may aspire, is to feel that there is one other

heart beating in unison with one's own, to read in the eyes of the loved one that his thoughts are yours, and to listen with thrills of delight to the sound of his voice. Such was my state of feelings when M. de Meilhan and I, arm-in-arm, passed the long lime avenue which led to the Castle.

My love for my husband was too deep, too intense to be displayed in demonstrations and meaningless words. Besides, I almost felt bashful with him; he knew it, and therefore expected little from me in a conversational way. I fully believe that our sensations were the same; we did not talk, so that we might lose nothing of the felicity which overflowed from our hearts. Had this earth been created for ourselves alone, I am sure it would have sufficed for our happiness; for who has felt thus, who has lived with an adored husband, face to face with nature, alone and under the eyes of the myriads of stars which adorn the blue canopy of heaven, and will deny that love is the great priest of the world?

During the few days that had preceded my marriage, and the still fewer that had elapsed since, I had found how nobly gifted was M. de Meilhan, and, although he showed no outward feelings of religion, I discovered he had strong and deep convictions on that point. He was also tolerant with all, indulgent and charitable with others, but severe to himself. He had great moral courage, and yet at times he was very impressionable. His generosity and liberality were unbounded; and in his wish to oblige others he often

suffered from being imposed upon. He dreaded to give pain; in one word, all his good and noble qualities were depicted in his large, dreamy, soft grey orbs, and on his amiable countenance. None saw him without saying at once, "This is a good man."

It was well that I had such a husband; as Beaupré was by no means a delectable place. It had partly fallen into ruins, after the depredations of the revolutionary mobs who had pillaged and burnt part of it; and, as it never had been repaired, there was a look of utter desolation, which we should have felt had we not been so fond of one another. Disregarding the want of comforts—which so strongly struck us after the luxurious life of the Hotel de la Fère—we quickly fell into the new routine which began for us, under such gloomy walls, as well as with the complete loneliness and ugliness of that part of the country where Beaupré was situated.

A week after our arrival I paid a visit to old Fanchette, the curé, and to all my old pensioners. They were glad to see me, especially as I dispensed many bounties in honour of my marriage.

M. de Meilhan had first thought of rebuilding that side of the castle which was so much in ruins, but I persuaded him not to do so, and he readily yielded to my wish. As I have already said, the country about was most uninteresting. Moreover, the place was haunted; and however childish and foolish this may appear, I felt so sure that this was no delusion of mine that I soon, notwithstanding the fear I had of

being laughed at by M. de Meilhan, told him what I had seen, and, indulgent as he was to me, he accepted, a short time afterwards, the offer made by M. de Bellefonds to purchase the place. I proposed that the money should be given, as a dower, to Marguerite de Meilhan, my husband's sister, who lived in Paris with her mother in very narrow circumstances. By the law of primogeniture, my husband had come into possession of the wreck of his father's fortune; but as I was rich I thought it infinitely better that Madame and Mademoiselle de Meilhan—although they rather looked down upon me—should be benefited by the sale of the estate, which, indeed, did not realize much.

We had Bransac, which was not only very pretty, but situated in a lovely part of the province of ——.

The apartments we were able to live in at Beaupré were very few, in the west tower. The centre part of the building, which had once boasted of a magnificent drawing-room, ball-room, and gallery, with bedrooms above, was all but in ruins, and overgrown with ivy. Vandalism, time, neglect, and damp had done their work; the panes of glass had dropped from the half-broken casements, through which the shoots of climbing parasites crept in from the outside. The walls were blackened by the smoke of the destructive fire of the heroes of republicanism; shreds of tapestry, paper, and silk hangings fell from them. Picture-frames, half destroyed, still showed here and there a

few atoms of painting. All the De Meilhans, De Bellefonds, and other ancestors had disappeared from the scene; one picture alone had preserved a woman's head, whose features were plainly visible; and of her I shall speak further. The eastern tower was entirely burnt; the back of the castle had more or less suffered, and was used for the servants' rooms. A small chapel had by some miraculous means escaped the ravages of the fanatics thirsting for blood and destruction. One tomb in black marble was the only tenant of the chapel; it was that of the Vicomtesse de Chabannes, whose face I had seen in the gallery, and who haunted the castle.

One night—it was towards the end of summer—I sat at my bedroom window, which commanded a view of the whole flat country which for miles lay before me. The sunset was past, the last golden tints had long faded away, the moon was slowly ascending from the horizon, showing an opalescent halo of rainbow colours, and now and then a few feathery clouds dimmed the brilliancy of the queen of night, whilst her lovely sisters, the stars, peeped one after another from their ethereal bed. M. de Meilhan had been obliged to go to a neighbouring town on business; he was not sure about returning that night. However, I had been watching, in case of the possibility of his coming back. I had told the servants they need not wait, and Célestine had also gone to bed, but reluctantly, fearing I might feel nervous. Tired of looking at the uninteresting panorama before me, I fell into a kind of

dozing, which had probably lasted long, for I awoke feeling very chilly—the breeze was blowing cold. I shivered, and getting up from my chair I leant on the window-sill to look afar and see whether any one was in sight. The moon was still brilliant, but I could distinguish nothing except the shadows of the tall poplars lining the main road, and those of the oaks and beeches about our place. I shut the window, and in turning round I found myself face to face with a tall form shrouded in white, standing quite close to me. Every drop of blood seemed to freeze in my veins; every nerve in my frame told me that some awful tragedy had taken place in the room, and that the woman who stood before me had played a part in it. For a few minutes I endeavoured to collect my senses, but in vain; for the piercing eyes of the unwelcome guest remained fixed upon me. All at once I remembered I had seen those eyes in the picture-gallery, and doubted no longer but that it was the Vicomtesse de Chabannes. Shivering with terror, and yet fascinated with the weird look of the phantom, I stood motionless. My hands dropped powerless, and I felt as if I must have died with fear. Still I tried not to give way, wishing to see what was going to happen. The ghost turned away from me, and going towards the fireplace, disappeared as if by magic through the tapestry which covered the walls. Célestine slept in the room above mine; I rang my bell most violently, and she was soon down. I told her what I had seen; but she tried to persuade me it was

a delusion, and quickly undressing me, she hastened my going to bed; and sitting in an arm-chair composed herself to sleep, urging me to do the same. But I could not do so; my eyes were fixed on the spot where the ghost had disappeared, and I expected every minute to see it again. As the old castle clock was striking one, I saw the gaunt figure of the dreaded spectre emerging from the same corner. I touched Célestine's head, which was within reach, and we both looked in silence at the unearthly being, who disappeared through the door.

I found it impossible to sleep again, and kept tossing on my bed for hours, till the sun in all its radiant beauty arose, letting floods of light enter the room through the latticed windows.

"Madame must go to sleep now," said Célestine; "all ghosts are safely lodged in their tombs at this hour;" and drawing the curtains round the bed, she softly left the room.

When I awoke I found a note from M. de Meilhan, full of love and regret at having to leave me alone again for the day, as his business was not terminated. It was our first separation since we had been married, and I felt it more than I could express.

"Have you ever heard anything about the ghost?" I inquired of Célestine, when she brought me my breakfast.

"No; but if Madame wishes to be enlightened on the subject, it will be easy to do so. There is an old woman who lives about four miles from here, at a

place called the Hollow; she knows everything about the ancestors of this family. The peasants about here call her a witch; for my part, I do not believe in such things; but if Madame likes, I will accompany her there this morning, and she will learn all she wants to know."

I readily accepted the suggestion, and telling her to put a few dainties in a basket, we sallied forth on our expedition. It was a more varied walk than I had ever seen in the place, being slightly hilly in some parts. We had to cross several vineyards, and at last descending into a lonely road, we took a small steep path, at the entrance of which stood a tall lanky lad, with an idiotic look; he laughed outright when he saw us, but when Célestine put a piece of "galette" in his hand, the expression of his face changed; he looked at her as if he could have worshipped her, and his eyes filled with tears; poor fellow! kindness seemed to have an effect upon him. Célestine asked him whether we could see his grandmother. He nodded in assent, and we pursued our way down the path, at the end of which was the hut.

A woman, who had not seen less than a hundred winters, sat by a small fire. She was dressed like the peasants of the province, and was surrounded with three cats; her keen black eyes scrutinized me from head to foot, then she said in a querulous voice:

"Excuse me, Madame, if I do not rise, but I am a cripple; pray sit down, and welcome to you for not despising the old woman who, because she has been

endowed with a power of seeing into futurity, has been called a witch. And now, Madame de Meilhan, what can I do to serve you?"

I told her why I had come.

"Ah! the Vicomtesse de Chabannes; so she still haunts the castle, and you want to know more about her?"

"Yes," I said; "but first of all take some refreshments, and then I shall be delighted to hear the story."

She did as I begged of her, and soon related the following narrative:—

"My grandmother, who died at 102—we all live to a wonderful age in our family—was a servant at Beaupré when the beautiful Mademoiselle Jeane de Meilhan, married the Vicomte de Chabannes. She would not leave her mother, and the west tower had been allotted to them. They lived very happily together for some years, but the Vicomte got tired of the dull life they led at the castle, and would go away for months at a time, leading a very gay life at Court. Madame de Chabannes became very morose and bad-tempered, and when her husband came home, there were some terrible quarrels. One day some gentlemen came to dinner; towards the end they got merry and teazed the Vicomte about some Court lady. The Vicomtesse's brow grew darker and darker, and when in the evening the guests had left the castle, she retired to her bedroom. When her husband went to bed, there were sounds of angry voices; they lasted long,

and then there was a dead silence, which was broken no more. The next morning the groom came to the kitchen to say that one of the horses had disappeared, and the Vicomtesse's maid entering a little while after, said the bed in her mistress's room had not been disturbed, and no signs of her clothes were to be seen about the room. The whole household was soon in a terrible confusion. M. and Madame de Meilhan were distracted; messengers were sent everywhere, but no one had seen anything. Days, months, and years passed, and still no discovery had been made; when one evening my grandmother had gone to the room—I don't know for what purpose, for no one ever went there—and thought there was an extraordinarily disagreeable smell. She went all round the room, and when near the fireplace it seemed worse. She ran downstairs, and taking some of the men-servants with her she returned to the tower, where they discovered a secret door in the wall. After trying long, a spring gave way, the door flew open, and showed the corpse of Madame de Chabannes, tied to a large peg; a handkerchief was also tied over her mouth, probably in order to stifle her cries when the dreadful act of barbarity took place. They all retreated in the greatest horror, and my grandmother had to go and break the news to the Baron and his wife. The poor lady was buried in the chapel, and ever since that she has from time to time been seen coming out of it and going to the room that once had seen her beloved and happy."

"Was not the Vicomte ever heard of?"

"No, Madame; it was believed some accident happened to him, or that he had gone to some foreign land, for it is said that his own family could never hear anything about him."

"And how did you come to know all this?"

"My mother was brought up at the house, and knew all from her mother, and when I was older I, too, was told of it. None of us were nervous people, and we all, one after the other, slept in the room. I myself saw distinctly the Vicomtesse; I was not undressed, for I had made up my mind to follow her, and I did so through the passages, and saw her enter the chapel and disappear into her tomb."

"Are there any of the De Chabannes alive now?"

"He was the last of his race, I believe."

"Is that your grandchild I saw just now?"

"No, he is not; I never married. At the revolution I was still strong, old as I was, and helped the cook in the kitchen; but when the castle was pillaged and partly burnt, we all had to flee the place. I had lost all my money and clothes, but was lucky enough to find shelter with a poor woman, who was just at the eve of giving birth to a child; she was a widow, living alone. I did all I could for her, only God in His mercy took her a few days after Jean was born, and I took care of him. Some wicked man one day met the child—he was then about five years old, —and taking him by the heels, plunged him into a ditch almost flooded by torrents of rain; poor lad!

I had waited in vain for him all day long, and as the twilight came on I started off in search of him, and found him half dead by the ditch; I took him up in my arms, carrying him home as fast as my shaking limbs would permit; with great difficulty I made him revive; but, alas! the fright had been too much for him, and from the bright intelligent child he was, he became a perfect idiot. May the Almighty have mercy upon him, and take him away in His own good time; but I pray it may be before me, so that he may not suffer from the taunts of this cruel world."

"I will speak to M. de Meilhan about you both," I said to the Gammer; "but tell me, how did you come to know how the child had been ill treated?"

"A little girl about his own age had been playing with him, and when the man—he did not belong to this part—caught Jean to throw him into the water, she was so frightened that she hid herself behind a hedge, then ran into the vineyards, where she remained part of the night; her mother came the next day to tell me of it."

"I am told you are able to read the future: will you tell me what will be my fate?"

For a few minutes the old woman's piercing eyes were steadily fixed upon me, then she said,—

"Force me not to unveil it for you. Enjoy the present, leave the future to God; He will take care of you."

I smiled, as if doubtful of her knowledge; she perceived it, and said,—

"Listen to me, lady, and remember in years to

come the old witch of the Hollow. Last night I saw in my dreams sights which will dawn upon you as vividly as they did upon me. I saw on the throne a new empress, and the good Joséphine hiding her tears and sorrows in her retirement. You will hear of it during some journey you are to take soon, and you will believe in me."

"What do you mean?" said I to the old woman, unable to repress my astonishment.

"That Bonaparte will cast away his wife to marry a princess—one who will never care for him, and who will—when the time comes that his ambition shall have carried him too far, and caused his downfall, and sent him into exile on some lonely rocky isle—abandon him to his fate, and go back to the land of her fathers with her own son, and forget she had been reigning on one of the fairest lands upon earth, and stoop to wed one who had been her father's subject."

These words were spoken with a strange emphasis, and as if the woman had been inspired. After a little more conversation I left the Hollow, promising the old woman I would take care of her and have her wants attended to, and in the meantime gave her all the money I had in my purse.

My husband returned in the evening. I told him all I had heard and seen; he looked amused and incredulous; however, he promised me that we should soon leave Beaupré, as M. de Bellefonds had promised to take it off his hands.

From that day Beaupré had a vague, nameless,

mysterious awe for me ; I dreaded being alone. The stamp of crime was there, and I never went to my room without feeling as if the Vicomtesse de Chabannes had been following me. I persuaded my husband to have the tapestry removed from where I had seen the ghost—for, notwithstanding my fears, I longed to see whether any remnants of the fearful tragedy were there. The door was easily found and opened ; a musty, damp smell arose from the large cupboard ; it was perfectly empty, and was going to be reclosed, when some glittering object arrested my eyes ; I stooped to pick it up ; it was a ring with an emerald surrounded with small lavender-coloured pearls ; on the gold circle some unintelligible words were written.

"You may depend, Mathilde, there is some charm about this ring," said my husband, laughing ; "and I wonder what language this is ?"

"I must show it to Dame Geneviève," I replied ; "it must have belonged to the Vicomtesse, and probably she knows something about it."

"You will soon be bewitched with the old dame's spells, if you do not mind."

"Oh, I do not believe in spells, and I will pay another visit to the Hollow to-morrow."

M. de Meilhan accompanied me part of the way the next morning, and I continued my walk to the Hollow with Célestine. The ring was on one of my fingers, and, taking off my glove, Geneviève had a full view of it.

"How did you come by this ring, lady?" said the old woman; "it belonged to the Vicomtesse de Chabannes."

I told her how I had found it.

"Strange, very strange," she said in a deep hoarse voice, "how it should have come there; for my mother saw it on her finger when she was laid in her coffin, and the lid was nailed on in her presence. There was some strange story about the ring; it had been given her by an old man who had come to rest himself in the kitchen one summer evening. He was unknown to us, and spoke a foreign language, with the exception of a few words in French. He was a handsome old man, with a long white beard, and wore a loose robe. The Vicomtesse was not married then. She was a winsome, pretty young lady. 'Take this, young maiden,' said the traveller, 'and remember that as long as you wear it, and the pearls remain white, you shall be happy; but from the day they change colour, then know that misfortune is at hand.'

"And the pearls remained almost white till the evening of her death, for my mother remembered well the words of the old man, and always watched the ring; it was on that night, for the first time, that she had been thoroughly unhappy. Wear it not, Madame; there is ill luck in it," continued old Geneviève.

But I did wear it; I felt as if I could not do otherwise; besides, it might have lost its charm, and notwithstanding the dreadful fear I had of seeing the ghost once more, it never left my finger.

On the night previous to our departure from Beaupré

I was rather tired, and had gone to bed early; I almost immediately fell asleep, when I was suddenly awakened by the icy touch of a hand, which rested on mine. I looked up, and by the indistinct rays of the moon,—which pierced through the window-curtains,—I saw standing by my bedside the tall ghastly form of the Vicomtesse de Chabannes; her cold bony fingers were trying to take hold of mine, evidently to pull off the ring; I uttered a piercing scream, which awoke M. de Meilhan; he started up, looked about, and distinctly saw the spectre, which was retracing its steps to the door. He got up, lighted a candle, and looked at my hand; the ring was still on my finger, which was quite benumbed; it was two days before it returned to its normal state.

On our way to Paris, we were to stop at different places, and especially at N——, where M. de Meilhan was desirous to see a young relative of his, who was at school in a convent.

We were received by a "Sœur Tourière," who, ushering us into a pretty neat parlour, bade us wait until she brought Mademoiselle de St. Ange. The latter soon came; she was a pretty brunette, rosy and lively, and was soon engaged in conversation with her cousin. The Tourière passing, I inquired whether I could visit the convent.

"Certainly, Madame, and I will ring for Sister Magdeleine, who will take you over it."

"And can I also enter its precincts?" said M. de Meilhan.

"Why not?" answered the nun good-humouredly; "we are not cloistered nuns; our rules are not very strict, and, as a relation of Mademoiselle de St. Ange, you may accompany Madame."

Scarcely had she finished the words when a tall, graceful woman appeared. She bowed, and begged us to follow her. The schoolrooms were first visited, as the young ladies were in the garden, then the refectories; and, to my great astonishment, M. de Meilhan was allowed to follow us to the dormitories.

"What a clatter of tongues you must have here, my sister!" said he, laughing, to the nun: "and do ever those twenty young ladies go to sleep?"

"From the time the prayer-bell rings the strictest silence is enforced; an infringement of the rules would be severely punished; they leave the chapel in the same order as they entered it, to go to the dormitories; and once there," added she with a smile, "they are pretty sleepy, and quite glad to go to rest as soon as possible."

"Is it so, Laure?" said M. de Meilhan.

"I for one prefer dreaming to talking, when I am in bed; for we have plenty of time to chatter during the recreation."

"And what do you dream about, fair cousin?"

"I build castles in the air, about strange things which will never happen, but it makes me as happy as a queen; however, I will not let you into my secrets; so don't ask me any more questions on the subject."

After visiting every nook and corner of the building, which was very large, and seemed excessively comfortable, we descended by a flight of steps to the extensive grounds. The view was very fine, as the convent was built on an eminence, and the gardens gently sloped and allowed the eye to roam over the country for several miles. Now and then an abrupt elevation broke out here and there at the end of the plain, clad with firs, chestnuts and walnut-trees, entwined with climbing vines, thus interrupting the geometrical uniformity of most of that part of the country. This portion of the ground was allotted to the nuns. My husband and his cousin walked first, Sister Magdeleine and I following. We soon arrived at a small arbour, covered with a "vigne vierge," whose leaves struggled with the sun, to prevent its rays piercing through their thick clusters. We both sat down in silence, and, as her eyes wandered over the landscape that lay before us, I gazed at her face, which seemed not unknown to me. Her pure pale transparent profile was framed in a white "guimpe," covered with a black veil; her eyes were of lapis-lazuli colour, veined with brown, and almond-shaped; the long black lashes of her eyelids gave her a certain expression of languor, or, perhaps, rather of sadness. Her mouth and nose were perfect, the lips, however, slightly compressed at the corners, as if by a wonted sad smile. There was something dreamy about the whole face, whether of suffering or sorrow, I knew not. "Where have I seen this face?" I asked to myself, and then involuntarily said, "Your

face seems familiar to me, and yet I cannot remember where or when I saw you."

She started as if awakening from a dream; a slight colour mantled her pale cheeks, and turning her soft eyes towards me she replied,—

"I have never seen you before."

"Did you know any one of the name of De Ferval?"

She clasped her lovely hands together, and looking earnestly in my face, said, in a voice choked with emotion,—

"Tell me, oh! tell me, is M. de Ferval known to you?"

"Monsieur de Ferval was my first husband."

Her lips parted as if to articulate some words, but they did not pass her lips; she shut her eyes, her face became ashy pale, and she seemed plunged in mute thoughts of anguish and despair. I was not deceived, then; I had seen the face, and it was no other than that of M. de Ferval's first and last love. After a few moments of inward communing with herself, she opened her eyes, and taking my hands in hers, said,—

"Did you love him?"

"Only as a father," I replied; and in a few concise words I related to her the history of my marriage.

"Thank God for it!" she ejaculated, with a sigh of relief; "and if on the other side of the tomb we meet again, oh, then he will be mine,—mine for ever!"

And her lovely eyes turned upwards to the vaulted ether, and a smile of happiness wandered over her lips: she appeared lost in ecstasy.

"Can you live here with this love in your heart?"

"I have tried to do so. Sometimes I have conquered my feelings, and at other times I break under the heavy load of sorrow which afflicts my soul; for I pictured him married, and perhaps loving another as he once loved me. I felt jealous; but now it is all over, and I shall only long more than ever for the time when this frail body shall be laid into its last resting-place;" and two pearl-like drops ran slowly down the snowy cheeks of the nun.

"Did you keep your Christian name in coming here?"

"No; I was called Nélia in the world, but on entering here, I chose the name of Magdeleine."

Among the rings I wore, I had one on my little finger which had been given to me by M. de Ferval, containing a tiny piece of his hair; I offered it to her.

"We are not allowed to accept anything," she said with a deep sigh; "I could not even bring with me the slightest memento of the best friend I ever had in the world; but I will take the hair, and it never shall leave me."

As she was finishing these words, and she had hidden the hair, we heard steps on the gravel-path, coming towards us.

"It is some one for me, no doubt; I have been too long away. Farewell!" she said, kissing me, "and thank you a thousand times for the unexpected consolation you have given me; I can die happy now, and——"

Her last words were lost to me; an old nun was

within hearing, and with a graceful bow she left me. Theo ther nun advanced, and offered to lead me to the boarders' playground, where M. de Meilhan and Laure were wending their way.

"What a lovely woman Sister Magdeleine is!" I said.

"Ah, Madame, beauty is of little use to us here, but Sister Magdeleine possesses something infinitely more valuable than beauty; she has an angelic nature, and is beloved by us all."

We soon arrived in sight of the young ladies, who reminded me of my own school days. The Superior passed and came to us; she was tall, stout, and much marked with small-pox, but had a kind, benevolent face. I asked a holiday for the pupils for the morrow, which was readily granted, and after taking leave of the ladies present, and of their young friends, we were soon out of the precincts of the convent. I told M. de Meilhan of my discovery, and the topic of our conversation for the rest of the day was almost entirely the interesting nun.

We travelled for several days without anything happening worth recording, when one evening a dreadful storm broke out, and we had to put up at a roadside inn. We were but a few miles from Paris, where we were expected that night, our servants having gone to the Hotel de la Fère from Beaupré. A young peasant woman with a fresh and homely face received us in the small but clean room, which was common to all comers. As it often happens, when for a certainty

there is little to eat, we were very hungry, and we ordered our dinner. She was very sorry, she said, but there was scarcely anything for a gentleman and lady like ourselves in the house. Her husband had gone to market that day, but owing to the storm would probably not be home for a long time.

Whilst waiting for our frugal meal, we watched the lightning, which now and then parted the clouds, illumining the whole country before us, and peal after peal of thunder roared over our heads.

The woman was in and out to lay the cloth; then came an "omelette au lard," whose savoury smell sharpened our appetites still more; a cheese made with goat's milk, some walnuts, grapes, and apples, with new black bread, composed our repast, washed down with the "vin du pays." M. de Meilhan and I were beginning to eat our omelette, when the sound of wheels was heard, and a few minutes afterwards a man's voice said,—

"By my faith, Françoise, this is the unluckiest spot I ever was at. For a certainty you are a witch; I never pass this way that either rain or tempest does not oblige me to stop here."

"Then it is a lucky spot, sir—to me, at least, especially when the weather is bad like this."

"And of course there is nothing to eat, as usual?"

"Nothing in the world, M. Redouté; a gentleman and a lady have just arrived, and all that was in the house is on their table."

"And I will be bound there is not enough to feed

a cock-sparrow; but surely you have bread and milk?"

"Some of the former, yes,—but none of the latter; the cat drank it all whilst I was feeding the pigs."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself, for being so careless."

The name had struck me; I remembered that Redouté was Joséphine's celebrated flower-painter, although other people might have had the same name; however, M. de Meilhan opened the door, and said,—

"Monsieur Redouté, my wife and myself will be delighted to share our fare with you; pray come in and take a seat."

"To whom may I have the honour of owing this kindness?" said Redouté, bowing low as he entered.

"To the Baron and Baronne de Meilhan; and I believe we are not mistaken in thinking we are having the pleasure of making acquaintance with the renowned painter of her Majesty?"

"The same," answered Redouté, with another bow; and soon the conversation became quite animated.

"You have probably heard the news," said Redouté, after he had finished his dinner.

"What news?" we both inquired at once.

"That the Emperor is going to divorce the amiable Joséphine."

I recollected the dream of the old woman of the Hollow, and told Redouté.

"It is, alas! but too true. Malmaison will hence-

forth be her residence, and I suspect that ere long her Majesty will be there."

"And how does she bear so fearful a blow?"

"In public, bravely. She is still the Empress. But in retirement every energy of her soul is gone, and I fear that the weight of woe with which she is overwhelmed will destroy her health, and, perhaps, lead her to her grave."

I felt sorrowful in hearing of the sad dénouement of Joséphine's strange and eventful life, and I asked Redouté to call on us in Paris, as I was anxious to hear from him now and then how this amiable woman would bear her misfortune. Towards nine o'clock the storm had passed away; the moon in all her brilliant splendour rose in the blue ether, in the midst of the myriads of stars which gemmed the heavens; no clouds were to be seen; and we ordered the carriage. Françoise was a little disappointed when she heard we were going, but we paid her well, and Redouté—who often passed that way—chatted with her in so pleasant a manner, slipping into her hand an unlooked-for handsome remuneration, added to what we owed her, that she reconciled herself to losing us. We took leave of Redouté with a promise that we should soon see him at the Hotel de la Fère.

Nothing could equal our pleasure in finding ourselves comfortably settled in our home, after the wretchedness of Beaupré; not but that I would have reconciled myself to it had it not been for the ghost, for I was intensely happy to be always alone with my

husband. With him to breathe the air of whatever place we were in, was happiness enough for me: no sacrifice in life would have been hard to bear as long as it was for his own sake, and whatever spot fate had assigned to us to live in would to me have been a paradise. The only drawback would have been my fear of his getting tired of solitude. Men are not like women on these points,—they cannot endure long a solitary and uninteresting life, however much they may love.

As there cannot be, even in the greatest happiness, thoroughly unclouded days, I found that in Paris I also had my fair heaven clouded now and then—not through my husband, but his family. I was to renew my acquaintance with the Baronne de Meilhan, my mother-in-law, and her daughter, the beautiful and haughty Marguerite. Both mother and daughter were as proud as they were poor. They inhabited a very small apartment in the Faubourg St. Germain, and had the greatest contempt for the Hotel de la Fère, situated out of that aristocratic and noble quarter. Immediately after the sale of Beaupré—which had brought but little—I had begged my husband to have the money settled on Mademoiselle de Meilhan, as her dower; as, according to the law of primogeniture, which was still in existence among the *haute noblesse*, M. de Meilhan had inherited the wreck of his father's property, paying out of it a small sum to the two ladies, allowing them thus to live in the strictest economy only. The Baron de Meilhan had been

guillotined, and Madame de Meilhan had miraculously escaped through the cupidity of one of the jailers, to whom she had promised a most splendid ring she wore. Marguerite and her brother had been sheltered under the roof of one of their old servants. The Baronne, after numberless perils, had joined them, and retired afterwards to Switzerland, where she devoted herself entirely to the education of Marguerite, living upon the product of the sale of some of her jewels. A Swiss pastor had kindly given lessons to Edouard; and thus had they lived, until the affairs in France changed for the better.

Had not the Baronne's prejudices been so great—and one wondered at it, after all her troubles, and the kindnesses received from those inferior to her in birth—I should have liked her; but she looked upon me as a plebeian, though on my mother's side there was noble blood; she never could understand how a woman could marry a man not entirely her equal. Besides, my admiration of Bonaparte was another cause for her great dislike towards me, which was equalled in all by her daughter.

I must confess, however, that the conduct of the Emperor towards Joséphine had much lessened my admiration for him, and I could not but now and then agree with what was said about him among the old nobility. As to the Empress, she had regained all her prestige since her fall. As widow of General Comte de Beauharnais—whose head had fallen under the revolutionary axe,—and up to the time she had

escaped the guillotine, she had been loved and admired; but when she became the wife of "le Premier Consul," and as soon as the imperial mantle covered her shoulders, few of the patrician ladies cared for her.

The marriage of Napoléon with Madame de Beauharnais was the result of esteem and of reciprocal admiration. He had often met her at Barras' house, and in some of the fashionable salons of the capital, of which she was an ornament. Joséphine was bewitching by her gracefulness, her charming manners, and the sweetness of her temper; she was the most amiable and the best of women. As soon as Napoléon knew her, he spent all his evenings at her house, which was the most agreeable in Paris. There one met M. de Montesquieu, Le Duc de Nivernois, and many other witty men. Bonaparte found so much charm in the society of Joséphine, that, notwithstanding the difference of their ages, he offered his hand and was accepted. Joséphine obtained permission from Barras that Bonaparte should be made General-in-Chief of the Army d'Italie, commanded then by Schérer, against whom there was much discontent.

Redouté called as he had promised, and kindly agreed to give me lessons in flower-painting, in which my husband joined.

We led a very pleasant life, especially when the skeleton in my cupboard was out of sight. I certainly did not see much of Mesdames de Meilhan,

and, with the exception of State visits, we mixed very little together. I must, however, say that I was not treated in the same manner by all the ladies of the Faubourg. I counted among my acquaintances many charming women, who did not look down upon me because, before marrying, I had not had a "de" attached to my name. The Duchesse d'Abrantès I saw often, as well as my friend Anaïs, but I refrained from going to the Tuileries.

It was after the second marriage of Bonaparte that I obtained permission from my husband to pay a visit to the ex-Empress. Redouté had spoken to her Majesty of my wish to do so, and she had graciously signified her pleasure that I should come as soon as possible. Poor Joséphine! she was very much altered in looks. Napoléon had struck this excellent woman—whom he had crowned twice—with the most terrible blow for a loving heart to bear, but she was as kind and as graceful as in times of yore.

In the course of his great and glorious career, Bonaparte had received from Joséphine the only happiness he ever knew. At all times she had shown herself a submissive wife and a tender and loving friend, and under all circumstances she had displayed the most absolute devotedness, the most yielding compliance to his wishes.

Joséphine possessed, moreover, another merit, which served Bonaparte's purposes admirably. She understood the French nation. At the time of her greatness, she never forgot her past privations:

as a poor widow, she had felt the sting of misfortune; as a great empress, her reign had been limited to making others happy, to relieving indigence and consoling misfortune. Joséphine had ascended the throne with modesty, and she descended it with dignity; she never ceased to love him who had abandoned her for a younger woman, whose coldness often stung Napoléon to the quick; her advice to her son Eugène was, to remain faithful to France, to his sword, and continue to defend the man who would no longer have disinterested friends around him. Eugène obeyed his mother.

When Bonaparte was unhappy, she wrote to him and offered him consolation, which she ended with that memorable sentence,—a sentence sufficient to overthrow the calumnies of those who neither knew how to appreciate nor to imitate her,—"Vous êtes malheureux et abandonné, si je suis la seule femme qui veuille faire son devoir et se dévouer à vous, dites que vous me désirez, et Joséphine ira vous consoler." Napoléon did not answer.

During the hour I remained at Malmaison, Joséphine spoke feelingly of the Emperor and of the new Empress; the former I could see she loved still as dearly as ever; she even applauded his resolution of marrying another. It was for the good of France, she said; and what was a woman when the whole nation was concerned? She was still the Empress, and when we parted I might have fancied her on the throne of the Tuileries.

In the following spring we left Paris for Bransac, where we spent the whole of the summer months; and often did I look at the portrait of the sweet and lovely Sister Magdeleine, and wonder whether her sorrowful life had been cut short, and if she had rejoined him whom she had so much loved.

My husband was excessively fond of the country, and there, I might say, we enjoyed unclouded happiness. There are sites, seasons, and hours which harmonize so much with one's heart's impressions, that one's soul seems to be part and parcel of nature, and I think it was the case with us. We loved Bransac and its situation; we loved the hours we spent there, because they were all happiness and sunshine; but had Madame de Meilhan and her daughter been with us, I think the scenes would have been discoloured, the charm would have vanished; and therefore I thanked the Almighty, night and morning, that He had spared me what would have been utter misery.

Never having been out of France, I begged M. de Meilhan to take me to Switzerland; we were not far from it, and when we first arrived there I was in raptures at the lovely scenery we met at every step. Strong and healthy as I was then, I could follow my husband in all his excursions; and to travel with a beloved object is perhaps one of the greatest felicities the heart can feel. Edouard knew Switzerland very well. During his years of exile he had taken walking tours, and now he took me to all the places where he

had been, making me thus feel doubly interested in our pilgrimage. We had begun with the north, visiting part of the Tyrol, returning through the south. When at Lausanne I felt rather ill, and the doctor we called in ordered me to go to Aix, in Savoy. Brown autumn, with its dun tints, but soft and pleasant, had set in then. The leaves, frozen by the night frosts, fell from the vineyards, the gigantic chestnut-trees, and the walnut-trees, and were swept by the warm winds of the south. All was calm and beautiful when we arrived, and I saw with pleasure that all the visitors had left, with the exception of one person, of whom I shall speak further. We had taken a small house, most pleasantly situated; from our windows we saw the Alps, hiding their peaks in the misty firmament, and from the mountain passes came to us the sound of the cold wind blowing hard between their narrow space, bringing over to us murmurs, sad and melodious, with which the soul was moved to its depths; it was like unearthly whispers from some departed spirits. We both liked it, for although Nature seemed to enjoy her last sunny rays, it was but like youth, dying in all its grace and beauty.

During our excursions we had met several times a woman whose elegant figure and deep mourning had attracted us; she lived but a few yards from our house, and yet we had never been able to see her face. One evening—as the fresh and bluish shadows had spread like a shroud over the horizon—we were hastening home, when we saw a boat on the lake, gliding silently

over its deep waters; it was tenanted by the strange lady I felt so curious to know, accompanied only by two boatmen; they soon threw down their oars on the strand and helped the unknown to step out of the boat; but she appeared ill, and almost unable to proceed to her dwelling. We approached her, and inquired whether we could be of any assistance to her; she answered in a plaintive musical voice that she would gladly accept my husband's arm, as she could scarcely stand. Before reaching her house, however, we had been obliged to make her rest on the bench outside the boatman's inn, and I was then at leisure to examine her. Hers was an ethereal beauty; her complexion was perfectly transparent; the lips of her chiselled mouth were slightly parted, displaying when she spoke the most beautiful teeth I had ever seen; her large black-lashed soft grey eyes seemed to pierce through a mysterious veil, hiding the unknown regions of eternity. Her dark hair made the fairness of her skin still more conspicuous; all her features were in unison, and never at Court, or among the noble ladies of the Faubourg, had I seen a lovelier being, with perhaps, however, the exception of Sister Magdeleine. Little by little her strength seemed to return, and we accompanied her to the house where she lived; I asked permission to call upon her the next day, which she readily granted.

Frequent were my visits to the unknown, as she was obliged to keep her room, and she appeared so entirely desolate and lonely in the world that I could

not refrain from offering my sympathy and friendship, which she accepted with overflowing gratefulness. One day M. de Meilhan had gone with two guides to make an excursion towards the Italian side of the mountains; I was not strong enough to accompany him, and I went to spend the day with the fair, sweet Oléa, the only name by which I am allowed to speak of her. We had been so much taken with one another that she did not hesitate to relate to me the sad story of her married life. I will let her speak for herself:—

"At sixteen I had lost my father, and my mother was so much bowed down by her sorrow, that within two months she had followed him to the grave, leaving me an orphan. My guardian was General de B——: I had known him from my childhood; I had played on his knees as I had done with my father; he had spoilt me with toys and bonbons as a child, and when older, with every knicknack pleasing to a young girl of my own age. The day after my mother's death he said to me:—'Oléa, my regiment leaves in a fortnight hence, and therefore I must look for a school, where you can remain until you have made up your mind with which of your relations you wish to live. Had I been thirty years younger, I might have offered you my hand; but, with your youth and beauty, you will form a more suitable match, and therefore we must bid adieu to one another.'

"I had never thought of love; my father and mother had been everything to me, and General de B—— had

shared all that I felt for my parents; I could not bear to be separated from him, and said,—

"'Do not leave me; you have been my best friend; I could never part with you.'

"'And would you consent to become my wife?'

"'Oh yes,' I cried, clapping my hands joyfully; 'yes, let me be your wife.'

"He drew me to his breast with a deep sigh, and said,—

"'Well! let it be so.'

"And the week after this conversation we were married quite privately, on account of my mourning; we started immediately for S——, for his regiment was quartered there, and I enjoyed my new honours with becoming dignity. The first four years of my wedded life passed very happily. M. de B—— was to me all I could wish for, and not once during that time did I give him the slightest cause for jealousy. I had one little boy who took much of my time, and I never felt dull or unhappy. But with age the General became less good-tempered, and often he returned home cross, and finding fault with everything. My own dear little boy was at that time taken from me, after a dreadful illness, and then, and only then, did I feel the extent of the great mistake I had made; but I would not have changed, had not a most unfortunate occurrence taken place. A nephew of General B—— was appointed his aide-de-camp; we were constantly thrown into one another's society, without the slightest idea on either side that it was a great mistake. He

was one of the most charming young men that I had ever met with. Clever, kind-hearted in the extreme, he made my fireside a perfect paradise. His attentions were most respectful; but an inward voice told me that I was loved, and I found that for the first time my heart was open to sensations hitherto unknown; but not a word passed our lips, and each kept their own secret, though unveiled to our eyes.

"One night, General de B—— was out; I had been alone nearly the whole evening, when Arthur came in; he was pale and haggard; his looks frightened me, and I inquired what had taken place.

"'I am ordered to exchange into ——— Regiment,' he said hurriedly, with a trembling voice, 'and in two days I must leave you.'

"A cry of despair came from my soul: I involuntarily got up. He was standing near the fireplace. The shock had been so terrible to me that I staggered, and was very nearly falling to the ground, when he extended his arms to save me, and said in a hoarse whisper,—

"'You love me, Oléa, I knew it, and that is why I must depart at once. We must not dishonour the white hairs of one of the best men in the world. Good-bye, then, my own adored one. Good-bye!—one kiss, the first and last that I shall ever allow myself to imprint on your pure forehead.'

"And as he did so we heard a curse! I turned wildly round; my husband stood there. I fainted, and when I recovered my senses, I found myself in

bed, and a note lying beside me. I tore it open; it contained these few lines:—

"'My uncle has forced me to accept a challenge for a duel, as he is persuaded we have wronged him. I shall fire into the air, and I trust that I may die from the blow I am sure to receive at his hands. Oléa, my own adored one, your name shall be the last word that will linger on my dying lips. Adieu for ever!'

"I rang my bell violently; my maid came in; I inquired what the time was, and whether General de B—— was at home.

"'It is just eight, Madame, and the General has been out since five o'clock this morning. How is Madame after her fainting fit?'

"'Have I slept all night, then?—and who brought this note?'

"'I did, Madame; M. de C—— gave it to me last night; and this morning early, when I came to deliver it, Madame was still asleep, so I left it on the table.'

"I asked no more questions, but got up, with death in my soul, and after praying to the Almighty as I had never prayed before during my days of happiness, I went to the little room where we always breakfasted, and found my husband seated there, looking cold and calm, as if nothing unusual had happened. Trembling like an aspen-leaf, I went to greet him.

"'Touch me not, Madame,' he said, with a thundering voice; 'touch not the murderer of your lover!'

"In an agony of grief, I fell on my knees before him, imploring him to hear me, but it was of no avail.

"'Rise, Madame, rise,' said he, with a sneering smile; 'go and mourn for your guilt, and that of your paramour, and remember that to-night I shall expect you to be ready to go to the Opera.' We were then in Paris.

"It would be too long to enter into the details of my life during the year which followed the death of M. de C——. Suffice it to say that evening after evening, while the opera season lasted, the death-knell of 'Madame, à l'Opéra,' resounded in my ears. There, in the same box where we three had so often sat, I had to devour the tears which were ready to flow from my eyes, and endure the everlasting agony of hearing now and then: 'I think Arthur would have enjoyed this.'

"At the end of this fatal year, General de B—— was taken very ill; I nursed him throughout his illness as if nothing had so cruelly estranged us. He received my cares at first with hate and contempt; then little by little my patience and forbearance triumphed, and on the last day of his sojourn on earth he said with a trembling voice,—

"'Oléa, I have but a few hours to live; tell me the whole truth; fear not,—I will forgive all, and try to leave this world without abhorring the day which saw me take you for my wife!'

"I repeated to him what had passed; he looked fixedly and searchingly into my pale emaciated face, saying,—

"'Oh Arthur! dear Arthur! I murdered you when you were innocent!—and you, Oléa, my own child,

my fond, devoted wife, will you, can you forgive me?'

"I passed my arms round his neck, pressed my lips over and over again on his forehead, and when I disengaged myself, my husband was no more. I discovered the spot where M. de C—— had been buried, and had both the uncle and nephew,—no longer enemies in death,—placed in the same tomb, where I hope soon to join them."

The cold weather was setting in, and we left Aix. I had invited Madame de B—— to come back with us to Paris, but she refused, and with great regret I left this charming, injured woman, to mourn over one of the saddest events I had ever heard of.

Leaving Aix, we went to Chambèry. I wished to visit "Les Charmettes," where Jean Jacques Rousseau and Madame de Warens had lived. What an immense deal of charm there is spread over a spot by the remembrance of those who have, either from their misfortunes or happiness, hallowed it! What would have been "Les Charmettes" without Madame de Warens? Like a day without sunshine, a sky without stars, a mountain without echoes, a garden without flowers. No doubt she was not what one would esteem, but she made Rousseau what he has been: without her, his genius would have been buried in oblivion. But alas! for her sacrifices; for Rousseau wrote the most odious pages about his benefactress. She had opened to him—whilst he was almost a child—her house, her heart; she cultivated his genius, and

gave him enthusiasm. Of what had belonged to Madame de Warens, a picture of herself alone remained. She had a charming face, and ought to have been loved by a nobler nature than that of the author of "Héloïse."

On our arrival in Paris, we heard of the dangerous illness of Madame de Meilhan. I offered my services to nurse her, but was haughtily refused by Marguerite, and I contented myself by driving every day to inquire about the Baronne's health; I was seldom admitted to her presence. Her illness lasted a month, then she breathed her last, and to my utter astonishment, on the night of her death, my husband brought his sister home. A suite of apartments was given to her, and I think for nearly two months I scarcely saw her. At last, whether tired or not of her loneliness, she joined us at our meals, where she sat like a beautiful statue, without ever opening her lips.

About that time I had a most unexpected visit from a person whose existence I had never heard of. It was Major Aymar, a distant cousin of my father's, who, when marching with his regiment through Blois, had met with an accident. As chance would have it, he was taken to the house of Doctor Joinville, who kept him until his recovery, and hearing his name, concluded he was a relation of mine. But whatever his reason, he never mentioned the fact to me in his letters. Major Aymar being in Paris, called, and I was delighted to welcome the last relative I had on my side. He was very handsome, and his manners

were charming; his conversation not less so. My husband was immensely pleased with him, so that he became a daily guest in our house. At first Marguerite absented herself from meals; then she gradually came back, and at last I discovered that the haughty, cold, aristocratic beauty was in love with my cousin. I saw it with infinite regret, for his sake; I had a presentiment that some disagreeableness would arise from it, but little suspected what the dénouement would be. Often Marguerite would be in the drawing-room when he came, and was so amiable that Major Aymar soon reciprocated the feelings of the fair patrician.

Two months passed thus, when one evening, my husband being out, I had retired—not feeling well—into the second salon, separated from the first by heavy velvet curtains; and I heard most of the conversation which took place between my cousin and Marguerite. The latter confessed her love, after hearing the avowal of that of the Major; but added she could never marry him. Long and imploring were the prayers of the officer; still Marguerite seemed inflexible, and at last both separated. I did not see either of them that night, and went to my bedroom. Célestine, in undressing me, said that Mademoiselle de Meilhan had been sobbing in her room, so I concluded that there had been a terrible inward struggle in her heart. But she was not one to yield long to her feelings; at least, I fancied so. I told M. de Meilhan on his return, and he expressed his regret that Major Aymar should have fallen in love with his sister.

"I know Marguerite well," he said; "and she would sacrifice the man she loves—and even her own life—rather than act against the principles my mother inculcated in her. She is cold by nature; yet, loving once, the intensity of her love would be very great—beyond all that one can imagine."

The next morning was bitterly cold; ice had covered the courtyard, like a mirror, but the heavily-laden sky portended a fall of snow. Already large flakes lazily chased one another, ascending and descending till they fell, either to melt or become crisp on the frozen ground. I was amusing myself by watching the little birds that were picking up some food thrown to them by the groom, when Célestine entered with a note in her hand, saying,—

"Mademoiselle de Meilhan's maid has just given me this. The former was to be found nowhere this morning. I went to the lodge to inquire, and it appears that at about six o'clock the 'cordon' was asked, so I suppose Mademoiselle went out."

Marguerite was in the habit of going to early mass every morning, though later than that, and was always accompanied by her maid, a young deaf and dumb girl she had taken from charity and brought with her to the Hotel de la Fère. Célestine had learnt the alphabet in order to be able to speak to her, and therefore was able to interrogate her; however, the girl knew nothing. I opened the note; it was very laconic, and ran as follows:—

several little packets in a drawer, addressed to Marguerite's friends, and a letter to herself—she could not read—in which it said that all her wardrobe was to be given to Claudine, and that she hoped she would be taken care of. In looking out of the window I perceived M. de Meilhan crossing the yard, and I returned to the drawing-room to wait for him. He looked extremely pale when he entered, and his voice faltered when he addressed me.

"You have some bad news to tell me: what is it?"

He hesitated a moment, then said,—

"It is no use hiding the fact from you, as sooner or later you must know the truth. It is very sad; therefore, my dear Mathilde, be prepared for the worst." He paused for a moment, then continued,—"Your cousin is dead!"

"Dead!" I exclaimed, scarcely being able to believe my ears; "then it must have been suddenly?"

"I grieve to say he committed suicide. Last night, on his coming back home, he wrote several letters—one to you among them—stating he could never be happy since the only woman he had ever loved refused him, and therefore, cowardly as it might seem, he was unable to live without her. He would have faced a hundred fights, but was as weak as a child before a woman's scorn, though he knew she loved him as much as he loved her. * * * Towards two o'clock the report of a pistol had been heard in his room; the servant had immediately forced his door open, but it was too late—life was extinct.

"And this horrible tragedy has been caused by a proud, wilful girl, who for the sake of a name has preferred blighting her whole life, and leading a good man to commit so dreadful a deed. Where is she herself? What has she done?" I inquired of M. de Meilhan.

"I had to call at my lawyer's, little thinking I should hear of Marguerite there. After my business was over, he said, 'I had a very unexpected visit from your sister this morning, M. de Meilhan. She came at about eight o'clock, accompanied by a priest, and saying she wished her money to be intrusted to the reverend gentleman. I told her it was not in my possession; the mortgage was for ten years, therefore I could do nothing for her. They both looked disappointed, but she begged me to draw a deed by which she gave entire power to the Reverend Moritier, Vicaire of St. Sulpice, over the interest, and at the expiration of the ten years to hand the capital over to him. Whilst they were busy signing the document I told one of my clerks to follow them unperceived. They took a cab, he did the same, and saw them enter the convent of the Carmelites.'

"I did not feel astonished," said my husband; "I always thought it would be her end. However, I intend to go there as soon as you are ready. I have ordered the carriage, for I wish her to know of the dreadful catastrophe that took place through her mistaken sense of right. It is but meet that she should mourn for the man to whom she would have owed her happiness."

We went to the convent, but were not allowed to see her,—merely to speak to her through a grating, thickly covered with some woollen stuff. She was accompanied by the Superior, who applauded greatly her renunciation of the world; censuring with the greatest asperity the conduct of the suicide. My husband, nevertheless, did not spare his sister, and we both left, feeling sure that poor Marguerite would soon repent her ill-judged, hasty step.

For several weeks I received no one except Redouté, who came generally twice or three times a week. Often we asked him to stay and dine with us; he was always pleasant and cheerful, and related all the little events of interest concerning Joséphine. The strange feeling of depression which had so overwhelmed me since the death of Major Aymar still continued, and nothing could make me overcome it. I was sure some other misfortune would soon take place. Alas! I was not mistaken, as will be seen in the course of this narrative. Unchequered had been my happiness hitherto, but I was fated from time to time now to feel the burden of trials which have been hard to bear.

I still wore the ring of the Vicomtesse de Chabannes, and one morning as I mechanically looked at it, I perceived that two of the pearls were more discoloured than usual. I did not like to say anything about it, though I felt uncomfortable in the extreme. At every sound I started; every step I heard in the hall made my heart beat; my work lay on my lap

untouched; I longed for some one to come and talk to me.

Edouard was out, so I had to remain with my own weary thoughts. At last Célestine entered; she was pale, and her face looked anxious.

"Has anything happened? You look quite scared," said I, as she came nearer.

"A young peasant-boy has just arrived from Bransac, Madame la Baronne; he is the bearer of bad news."

"Where is he? Make him come at once; do not keep me in suspense."

The boy was called, his face getting redder and redder as he advanced. I knew him very well, as he was employed in the garden at Bransac. I said to him,—

"Well, Pierrot, who has sent you here?"

"No one, Madame la Baronne; I came of my own accord. There was a fire raging at Bransac for a whole night and part of the next day. The Château is burnt to the ground. I could not rest till I made my way here to tell you of it."

I was almost paralysed by the news. Bransac had always been my favourite place, and I could scarcely realize the truth of what I had just heard; it seemed like a dreadful nightmare. But, alas! it was only too true; and M. de Meilhan, coming in at this moment, heard the whole distressing story. There were but two old people taking care of the house when we were not there; the gardeners lived away from the premises, and it was not until the next morning that,

going to their work, they had seen the flames, fanned by the wind, devouring the building. Far from any village, they could reach no place in time to procure assistance; besides, it seemed a hopeless case, and as they neared the spot, they saw that all efforts would be in vain. The charred remains of the two unfortunate people were found, and no one ever knew how the fire had originated. Though a useless step, M. de Meilhan thought it better to start at once, to see whether the boy had not magnified the story, and I had to make up my mind to a separation of a few days.

Redouté came unexpectedly, for it was not his day; I told him of our new misfortune. He sympathized with me, and said he was going to Malmaison that evening, and would tell Joséphine. The next day he returned with a little note from the Empress, which ran thus :—

"MY DEAR BARONNE,

"Our friend Redouté told me yesterday of the disaster that has befallen the Château de Bransac, and said you were alone. I, too, am *alone!* not in every sense of the word; but you will understand what I mean. Pray come and spend with me the time M. de Meilhan is to be away. You will give me much pleasure if you do so.

"I do not say adieu, and with affectionate regard,

"Believe me, your friend,

"JOSÉPHINE."

I positively could not refuse so kind and gracious an invitation; Redouté was to accompany me; and

giving orders to Célestine to prepare everything for the journey, and leaving a few lines for M. de Meilhan, in case he returned before me, we started; and late in the evening, I found myself once more in the presence of the amiable Empress. No one could have been more kind than her Majesty was. She made me retire almost immediately to the apartment that had been prepared for me, saying that if the weather were fine the next day, we both would take a walk in the grounds, and she would show me all her curious exotics, of which she was very fond.

The sun rose gloriously brilliant the day after my arrival. Breakfast over, we sallied forth to visit the hot-houses, filled with the most lovely plants. Joséphine tried to be cheerful, but I could see now and then that a cloud of sadness covered her brow.

"Madame de Meilhan and I will take a walk now in the grounds, mesdames," said her Majesty, turning to the ladies in waiting, "and you may return to the house, if you like."

The hint was taken, and Joséphine and I went alone. It seemed rather a relief; I felt more at ease, and I also hoped that her Majesty would talk of her present life; but she said little or nothing about herself: it was of the great man she loved to think and entertain others with; and she related a few anecdotes, which I had never heard before. I will give those I remember:—

"From his tenderest youth," said Joséphine, "Napoléon loved order and discipline. On holidays, the

pupils of the College of Brienne usually acted. One day, when the 'Death of Cæsar' was given, the porter's wife wished to enter; she was refused admission; a great noise ensued. Napoléon, who was the officer on duty, was told of the importunity of the woman, when he said, with much sang froid, 'Qu'on éloigne cette femme qui nous amène ici, la licence d'un camp.'

"Napoléon liked to tell us of the first time he put on his regimentals, and used to laugh very much at what had happened the same night on his arrival in a drawing-room. Mademoiselle Bermon, who was about thirteen years of age, cried: 'Oh, le chat botté!' The company laughed very much, and Bonaparte took the joke with a good deal of amenity. A little while afterwards, he procured the most beautiful copy of the 'Chat botté,' had it richly bound, and offered it to Mademoiselle Bermon.

"Bonaparte was four-and-twenty when he was made chef-de-bataillon, with the order of joining General Cartaud. When the young man arrived at the 'head-quarters' he presented himself before the General, a superb man, gilded from head to foot, who asked him in what way he could serve him. Napoléon presented the letter which appointed him to direct the artillery operations. 'It is very useless,' said the General, caressing his moustache; 'we do not require anything to take Toulon. However, be welcome; you will share in the glory of burning it to-morrow, without having taken part in the fatigue of it;' and he bade the young officer stay to supper.

"It was at the time of his intimacy with Talma, the great tragedian, that he formed the plan to go and help the Turks, and organize a European army. 'It would be astonishing,' said he one day to his friend, 'if the little Corsican soldier became some day king of Jerusalem.' He forgot that the Holy City was never to form a kingdom.

"How much I like to remember all the anecdotes about Bonaparte!" said Joséphine smiling; "but I fear I am tiring you."

"I can assure your Majesty that I am exceedingly fond of hearing 'les bons-mots' of the Emperor."

"Well, if so," said Joséphine, "I will tell you something more. When I knew Bonaparte he was very thin, and one day as he was going through the streets, with his staff—it was during the republic—groups of men, women, and children surrounded them crying for bread. A very fat woman, remarkable for the vehemence of her gestures and her words, cried:—'Tout ce tas d'épauletiers se moquent de nous; il leur est fort égal que le pauvre peuple se meure de faim, pourvu qu'ils mangent et s'engraissent bien.'

"'Bonne femme,' answered Napoléon, 'regardez-moi bien; quel est le plus gras de nous deux?'

"A universal laughter took possession of the mob, and the French mob is soon disarmed when it laughs; so that the staff was able to get away quietly."

"I often heard it said, that the Emperor disliked Madame de Staël: is it true?"

"Yes," answered Joséphine, "and she never forgave Napoléon for an answer he made her once at an evening party, at the Prince de Talleyrand's. The advances and pretensions of Madame de Staël were very unpleasant to Bonaparte, and when she asked him—whilst he was among a large circle of people—who in his mind was the greatest woman in the world, alive or dead? 'Celle,' answered he, in a freezing tone, 'qui a donné le plus de citoyens à la patrie.' Madame de Staël, who probably had looked for a compliment, was much disconcerted, and thought to avenge herself by saying 'she had collected materials for Napoléon's history, but now would only write the adventures of Bonaparte.'"

Scarcely had Joséphine finished these words, than we heard footsteps on the crisp gravel of the path where we walked; we turned round to see who it was, and, to my intense astonishment, Bonaparte, alone, was coming briskly towards us.

"Ah, ah, Madame," said the Emperor to me, after he had greeted Joséphine, "although Malmaison may be more attractive to you than the Tuileries, I hope you will soon accompany Madame la Duchesse d'Abrantès; I shall see her to-night, and tell her the day she is to present you to——"

The name did not pass his lips. I answered not, but, courtesying low, I backed towards one of the diverging paths, and was soon out of sight.

I went straight to the house, and retired to my own room till dinner-time. Joséphine did not appear,

and her Majesty only showed herself for about a quarter of an hour in the evening. Her eyes were red; she had evidently wept. The next day I was favoured with another walk.

"You were surprised to see the Emperor," said her Majesty; "this is the second time since the divorce he has been here, accompanied by an aide-de-camp. It does seem so strange," she continued, casting her eyes on the ground, "so very strange to look at him in the light of another's husband. Oh! if my affection for him were not as great as ever, it would not so much matter; but it breaks my heart to think I am nothing to him now." And two large tears ran slowly down the cheeks of the unfortunate Empress.

There was a pause, during which I thought it would be best to change the topic of conversation, and I spoke about "la Martinique."

"Ah! those were happy days, Madame de Meilhan; and when the old negro woman predicted to me I should become a great lady, how my heart fluttered with joy! But had I known that I should have to give up the man who put the imperial diadem on my brow, I would have refused; for I had no ambition, except that of being loved. Have you seen Marie-Louise?" she added, fixing her eyes upon me.

"Not yet, your Majesty."

"Bonaparte is angry with you for not having been presented yet; but I told him of your late misfortunes, and he said, 'Eh bien! nous attendrons.'"

I thanked her Majesty; and after a few more allu-

sions to the Emperor, we went in. The day passed very quietly. The Empress worked, as well as the other ladies present, until dinner-time. Her Majesty related an anecdote about a relation of hers, Mademoiselle Aline Tascher de la Pagerie, who had left Martinique to come and be educated in France, and in returning it was supposed that the vessel had been wrecked. She was engaged to be married to a young nobleman a year after her return. Many years after this conversation, I heard the history of Mademoiselle Tascher, which was a very touching one. She had been taken by Greek pirates, and sold as a slave. She was remarkably beautiful, and was bought for the Sultan's harem. A short time before, the Sultana had died; it was reported that the Sultan was inconsolable, and the private apartments of the late favourite had become so sacred to him, that strict orders had been given to the effect that no one should enter its precincts. Whether from curiosity or ignorance of the injunctions given, Aline entered one morning the forbidden chamber, and sat on a pile of cushions, whilst burning tears of misery and shame fell from her eyes; probably inwardly praying the Almighty for her deliverance. She had been thus a long time, when raising her eyes she perceived the Sultan standing before her. There was no anger on his face, but she fell on her knees, bending down her head till it touched the ground. For some time she remained prostrated, and at last, hearing no sound, ventured to raise her head; the vision had disappeared; but close

to her side a handkerchief had been thrown, and on the same evening she was declared the favourite; becoming shortly afterwards the Sultana.

The Ambassadress of France at the Porte was once allowed to see the Sultana; she had then two children; and when the Ambassadress offered to let her relations know of her fate, she replied, that the Sultan had been very kind to her, and on account of her children she felt herself bound to him, adding at the same time, that it was better all those who had loved her should believe her dead; for especially to one adored being it would be misery, and it was better she should bear alone the cross which had been sent to her, light though it had been made by the Sultan's kindness and the love of her children.

Her Majesty also told us of her sojourn in Italy, and many anecdotes about Madame Tallien, which I am afraid I have quite forgotten. After dinner we sat round the fire and talked.

"Did you ever hear, Madame de Meilhan, what prevented the conspiracy of the 'infernal machine' taking place?"

"I did not, your Majesty."

"We were going to the Opera, when General Rapp stopped me, saying, 'Madame, allow me to arrange your shawl in graceful folds' (Napoléon, then Consul, had brought many splendid shawls from Egypt I took quite a fancy to them); it detained us several minutes, and the machine exploded just before the carriage reached the spot."

Later in the evening we played at cards, whilst some of the gentlemen read aloud. After a light supper the Empress left, accompanied by one of the ladies; and we all retired.

I remained two days longer at Malmaison, and having heard of the return of my husband, I left the Empress, who had shown me every possible kindness during my visit.

I longed to hear about Bransac. A ray of hope was still in my mind; but, alas! nothing remained. The pitiless flames had devoured all; not a vestige of the things I prized most had escaped the disaster.

Before the two catastrophes I have related, I had once a week a general reception, and after my return to Paris from Malmaison, M. de Meilhan wished me to receive again. I cared little for any society except his; as long as I could contemplate his kind face, bask in his sunny smile, and hear him talk, I felt happy; but he fancied I was low-spirited and required a little excitement, so to please him I sent out my general invitations once more. Very few women of the old nobility came to these *réunions*, but we had many of its young scions, whose views were somewhat more liberal than those of their elders. Amongst others of less high birth, we received many of the *élite* of celebrated men of letters, a few philosophers and politicians, who had been the light of the last century, and who had escaped the revolutionary axe, as well as the voluntary servitude, of the Empire.

Madame d'Abrantès had introduced to me several

clever and amiable women, with a sprinkling of what was best among military men. Our evenings took place on Thursdays. Every Tuesday we had a select dinner-party and reception in the evening, entirely confined to M. de Meilhan's set, and on Saturdays we had always a few people to breakfast. The rest of the week we might have accepted invitations, but we seldom did so. My husband read to me of an evening. My affection for him had increased since our marriage, and I was experiencing that most supreme happiness which results from the union of two souls in such harmony as were ours. With M. de Ferval I had felt there was something wanting for me,—my life was incomplete. Now I drew happiness from the eyes, the heart, the voice of one who returned all I gave him. There was between us a union of our souls which made us feel that separation would be terrible to both of us; I had experienced it during his short absence, and he had done the same. We were very much like the ray of the sun which sets, and the ray of the moon which rises; thus meeting the same horizon to be blended in the same ethereal sphere. I wished for no other being to come between us, and, strange as it may appear to most women, I dreaded the time when I should have to share with another what I wished to be entirely his. On his part, he certainly had a sort of longing for a child, but it was more for the sake of the name than otherwise, as at his death it would become extinct.

The winter passed agreeably till February, when I

had a little girl, who died immediately after her birth. She was not shown to me, so that the maternal feelings were scarcely awakened. I must confess that I did not grieve at her being taken from me then, as I should have done had she lived for a time.

Just a month after, Marie-Louise gave a son to the Emperor, who rushed immediately to the drawing-room door, where all the great dignitaries of the State were assembled, and said, "C'est un roi de Rome." Madame d'Abrantès, who was with me some time afterwards, told me that in a moment of intoxicating happiness Napoléon had said, "Dans cinq ans je serai le maître du monde; il ne reste que la Russie, mais je l'écraserai!" Poor Napoléon, that same year was to be the last happy one of his eventful career.

A somewhat strange coincidence took place in the following May. Joséphine, who did an immense deal of good, had heard that the wife of some official at the Tuileries had given birth to a son on the same day as the Roi de Rome was born. The husband had met with a terrible accident, and had died from its effects a few days before, leaving his widow in very narrow circumstances. The Empress therefore came to Paris incognito, accompanied by Redouté, to see Madame Daunoi, and take the child under her protection. As Joséphine was going to leave the room, two ladies entered. Joséphine looked at the first one, who, with a haughty stare, advanced quickly, as if afraid of coming into contact with some one much beneath herself. The ex-Empress, who had seen portraits of

Marie-Louise, recognized her at once. "A convulsive spasm passed over her face," said Redouté, "and she never spoke during her drive to Malmaison."

Bonaparte had obliged Marie-Louise to see Madame Daunoi, because her son had been born on the same day as the Roi de Rome, and, on account of the father's death, was to be provided for. I often wondered what had become of the child, who had had two Empresses near its cradle.

There has never been any generous action, any word, which recalled the Austrian princess to the mind of the French. At the approach of danger she fled with her son, and did not wait for the death of Napoléon to give him a successor; and when he was dead she hastened to replace him.

As the spring, with all its brilliant flowers and its warm days, waned to give place to its richer and warmer successor, we thought of leaving Paris for the country; no more to go to dear old Bransac, with some of its loved associations, but to some strange spot, and amidst new scenes, which, however beautiful they might be, would not have the same charm for us.

Redouté had proposed to us to take the house of a friend of his for three months. "It is but a humble dwelling," said the painter, "but you will do a benevolent act in taking it; he is poor and ill, and was ordered to the sea-side, but cannot manage to do so with his narrow means; in taking his house, you will enable him to try and restore his health."

We agreed to this plan, and in the middle of June were established at "La Maison Blanche," as it was called. It was delightfully situated on the banks of the Loire, backed by woodlands forming slightly rising elevations, and where were sites of much varied beauty. The house itself was small, but comfortable enough, surrounded by the graceful silvery birch, with its trembling feathery foliage, stately oaks, walnut, elm, maple, plane and chestnut trees, giving a most charmingly cool shade. From the terrace at the bottom of the garden, the beautiful Loire lay peacefully in its sandy bed, and gave a great charm to the whole landscape; whilst afar on the opposite side vineyards, fields, and villages relieved the monotony of its somewhat flat and woodless landscape. With the exception of two or three small farms, there were no habitations near us; but at about a league off a small castle inhabited by an English family rose on high from the bosom of magnificent trees. The paths approaching it were lovely. Little rills trickled here and there, gliding over water mosses of the prettiest green, and over grey and reddish pebbles. There were also glades, through which the sunbeams were scarcely able to pierce, so thick were the branches which met overhead. Then one emerged through grassy paths, carpeted with flowers and ferns; and having reached the summit of the hill, from a broad terrace the eye could wander over the whole panorama, indistinctly seen below, and fading into the far horizon.

For several weeks we led "cette intime et délicieuse

vie à deux"—I could not render this into English—which to me had always been so perfect. We took long walks in the morning, visiting all nooks and corners within our reach. It was certainly not so grand as the sublime sites of Savoy: we had neither its grottoes, gorges, cascades, nor vales. We saw no longer the mountains rising against heaven in high dark ridges, but there was something graceful and soft around us; it was for the time being an Eden of which—after years of sorrows—I have cherished a sweet and most precious remembrance.

When the sun became too powerful, we returned to the house, and we painted, or M. de Meilhan read aloud, whilst I worked at something destined for his own use. In the afternoon we sat on the shaded terrace,—with the slight breeze from the river caressing us in passing on its way to the heights,—watching the few passers-by, who for the most part were peasants going to and fro from the fields to their homes, and also the boats skimming the peaceful river. In the evening we entered our own little skiff, and went a long way off, rowed by two boatmen. We did not talk much, but we were perfectly happy; we scarcely ever noticed the flight of time except from the rays of the setting sun, leaving in the sky a roseate hue, making room for the twilight, or for the silvery light of the moon. Sometimes we remained till midnight on the water, and it was always with regret that we left the pure balmy air of out-doors to re-enter the house. We found no monotony in our life; but it was

soon disturbed—though not unpleasantly—by a little incident which made us acquainted with our neighbours from the Château d'Arbelles.

A sudden heavy shower had passed over the place, and childish screams and laughter were heard in the garden, in front of the house, and soon four children and two nurses entered the tiny passage which formed the hall. Célestine came in to tell us of the unexpected arrival. I went out and made the joyous little band enter into the dining-room. The eldest child was ten years old,—a cripple drawn about in a little chair, from which he was taken. He was a pretty little fellow, with fair curly hair; looking rather delicate, but intensely clever. His poor little legs were extremely thin, and appeared of very little use to him. The other children were all fair and pretty, and went on chatting gaily in a sort of semi-French, semi-English, which was rather difficult to understand. Fruits and cakes were brought, and they helped the little ones to pass the time away, blending eating with laughing and merry chatting until the shower was over.

The next day a lady and gentleman called; they were the parents of the children we had sheltered the day before. They were Sir William and Lady Clayton. Both looked amiable and well-bred, and were a very handsome and aristocratic-looking couple. It was lucky they spoke French, as neither M. de Meilhan nor I knew a word of English.

After a short visit they left us, graciously expressing

the hope we should soon meet again. A few days afterwards we returned the visit, and after that became very intimate. Lady Clayton told me the reason for having come to live in France. The little cripple had been ordered as a last resource to try the grape cure, and for two years during the vintage he was put every day into a small vat filled with grapes, and remained there for two hours; the vintage over, he had a wine-bath, up to the hips, every other day, and he had derived some benefit from this treatment; they therefore were in hopes that by persevering he would in time be completely cured.

"How happy you seem!" said Lady Clayton to me one day, as we sat alone on the terrace of our house; "and yet you have no children."

"My husband is everything to me," I replied, "and I wish for no other happiness than to have him constantly with me; and surely you, Lady Clayton, are not less so than I am?"

"Were it not for my little boy, no woman could be happier than I am," she said with a proud smile; "like yourself, I love my husband intensely, but I have had a terrible sorrow once, and if it will not weary you I will relate to you that part of my life, which is so impressed on my memory, that I shall be able to tell you word for word all that passed; especially as Sir William is throughout the hero of my story.

"I lost my mother when I was barely six months old, and Jane Dawson—or Mrs. Dawson, as she was called in the household—her maid, took charge of me;

a charge she would not relinquish until I was married. My father, whose peculiarities were innumerable, was glad not to be tormented with me, so that he allowed Dawson to have entirely her own way. I must say that she behaved admirably well, and as she had always studied my mother's manners—so she used to tell me—she strictly inculcated them in me. As soon as she thought I ought to learn, she intrusted the care of my instruction to the younger daughter of the curate, who came every morning for two hours. As I grew up, masters came from the neighbouring town; and at eighteen she considered my education finished, dismissing all my masters. I played, sang, drew, and painted well, and knew also several languages. At her request the Rector had examined me—he had been wrangler at ——, and he readily admitted that I was a well-educated girl, whose gentle ways and yet elegant manners would not have been disdained by a Duchess—flattery which made Dawson's heart beat with joy—and not a better young lady could be found in the British Isles. From that day I was free to do what I liked, as long as Dawson knew about it.

"My father, constantly buried in scientific researches, scarcely noticed me. We met at meals, and that was all. He was always excessively kind; he gave me an allowance of £200 a year, so that I was able to do as much good as I liked. Yet with all this, I felt at times rather lonely; but we lived in a very retired spot, and the curate's daughters being married and away, I had to amuse myself in the best manner I could.

"This state of things, however, did not last long; and one morning my father said to me,—

"'Edith, Newland Park is let; my agent has written to say that General Ormsby has taken it.'

"Newlands belonged to us, and had not been let for the last twenty years; my father could never find tenants to please him. It was a very fine place, quite near our own park; in fact, there was only a lane to cross, and we were in it. I felt quite delighted at the idea, and after luncheon, I went to tell the news to the old woman who took charge of the house. As I was returning home, I went down the long beech avenue, and being rather tired, I sat down on the stile near the gate, thinking about the new comers. I was suddenly roused by the gallop of a horse, and looking up, I saw it was ridden by a very handsome young man, who stopped, and raising his hat politely, asked the road to Upton, our village. I directed him, and whilst doing so, I was much struck by his face, which was still handsomer without the hat (which he held all the time I was talking). His hair was rather dark; his complexion pale but healthy; the hazel eye had a very mild, yet lively expression; the nose was faultless, and the mouth, though too large, was so well finished with pearly white teeth, and the smile so sunny, that I, who had never seen such a face before, felt quite captivated.

"I had ordered my pony-carriage to come and meet me, so that the stranger had scarcely disappeared when I was seated in it, driving through a different lane to

the village, as the unknown was passing the post-office. I stopped and went in. The post-mistress was a great invalid ; I often went there to inquire about her wants.

"'What a fine day it is, Miss!—and how is the Squire and Mrs. Dawson?'

"Dawson was never forgotten, for people knew that her sway was very great at the Hall.

"'My father is quite well, thank you, Mrs. Craigg, and so is Dawson; by-the-bye, you seem to have some one new in the village. I just saw a strange gentleman pass on horseback.'

"'Bless you, Miss, he does not belong to this part; no one knows from whence he comes, I'll be bound, or else I should have heard.'

"After a little more talk, I returned to Glossop Hall, our place, and as the gates of the great avenue were thrown open, I perceived my beautiful unknown passing: he lifted his hat and soon disappeared.

"Hitherto no man had ever occupied my heart; love was as unknown to me as the antipodes; but as I entered my little boudoir, a new life seemed to dawn upon me: I felt happier, yet more lonely; something was wanting which until now I had not needed. As I had still an hour before the dressing-bell rang, I took my pencil, drawing a sketch of him I had seen. It was amazingly like, I thought, and made up my mind to commence a miniature the next day.

"My father, somehow, was more talkative than usual, and we chatted much together about the new neighbours, who were soon to come.

"'I hope,' said my father, 'that there will be some young girl with whom you can associate, Edith; I always felt sorry for you that I had such a dislike to society; yet, perhaps, it is not to be regretted. Yours has been a smooth, happy life, unchequered by the thousand little annoyances attending worldly duties; besides, all the people within a reasonable distance are old and without children, so you did not lose much.'

"'Except Lord Sutley, papa.'

"Ah, yes, to be sure; Sutley has two daughters; but unfortunately he and I never agreed when we were at school together, and it caused quite a coldness between us in after life.'

"That evening when I entered my room, where Dawson was always waiting for me, to brush my hair for the night, I was twenty times ready to tell her of my meeting, but somehow I was afraid she would be troublesome as to my going out alone, and I said nothing.

"'Leave the window open, please, Dawson; the air is so balmy and warm to-night,' I said to her, as she prepared to leave the room.

"And when she was gone, I sat there. The full moon was sailing, in all its summer radiance, through clouds of fleecy whiteness, and threw her slanting beams in showers of silver about the room. I dreamt long—long, as I had never done before, till the air became chilly, and I retired to dream again; but this time not a created dream from my own fancy. I

thought I was at the gates; he passed, and with his beaming eyes, bowed in his silent and graceful manner, as he had done before, and then approached me and spoke of love; he pressed my hands in his, and all vanished.

"I got up very early in the morning, and ran to my boudoir to begin the miniature of the unknown; and after luncheon I sallied forth to have again one more look at dear old Newlands before its passing into other hands. As I crossed the road I was startled by the sight of him who had so much occupied my thoughts since the day before; he bowed, smiling as he did so, and vanished in the winding lane. A sudden sadness came over me; it might be the last time I was to see him, and as I paced up and down the mossy path between the coverts, I felt as if my heart would break. In leaving the coverts, I entered a dark plantation of larches; it was cool, and the silence of the place was only broken by the harsh cry of the pheasants flying away heavily at my approach, and the sweet notes of the blackbirds and thrushes. Then the wide expanse of the park, and the grand house, with its Corinthian pillars, came in sight. Carts were already depositing loads of furniture; I heard that General Ormsby would be there the next day.

"On the morrow I drove to Asheldon village. It was one of those pretty spots with which England abounds. I had let the ponies take that way in the hope that chance would lead them where I might see him! And I did: he was crossing to the other side

of the village on horseback; he had seen and recognized me, for he lifted his hat, slowly wending his way on the opposite side. I had some pensioners at Asheldon, and went to see them. At old Dame Watson's I sat down and made her talk.

"'Who is the gentleman who just passed?' I asked.

"'I don't know his name, Miss, but he came early this morning, putting up at the 'Bell;' and Kate Andrews, the landlady's daughter, said he painted some sketches, and that he was such a handsome gentleman, and so civil-spoken, and she never had seen the like of him before; although plenty of them gentry goes and chatters to her during the fox-hunting season.'

"How was I to find out his name? Was I ever to see him flitting like a shadow before me, to lose him again and again? I felt quite dispirited; only on my return home, when I ran to my picture, I found it was so perfectly like him, that it seemed as if the eyes were following me and the lips going to part and smile. Several wet days came, and I was a prisoner, longing for my freedom; but of course I should probably never see him again.

"At last we heard the Ormsbys had arrived, and my father requested me to call. I found General Ormsby, his wife, and his daughter in the drawing-room. The General was a courtly man. Mrs. Ormsby looked a great invalid, and the daughter a pretty girl, about my own age. We had a long chat about the place. I explained why my father did

not make calls, but hoped Miss Ormsby and I would become friends, and I left. I took a different road to return, and again my ideal passed. My cheeks turned crimson, and my heart beat so violently that I felt as if I were going to faint.

"Julia Ormsby called a few days afterwards with the General. Wonderful to relate, my father saw him, and my new friend came to have a look at all my curiosities. She was turning over my drawings, when her eyes were attracted by the likeness of my mysterious loved one.

"'You know this gentleman?' said Miss Ormsby, slightly blushing.

"'No,' I said, colouring up; 'I did it from memory. I never have any subjects to sketch or paint, and happening to see him pass, I amused myself in trying to draw his face.'

"'It is amazingly like. We met him in the train the day we came here; he struck me as being remarkably handsome: do you not think so too?'

"'Yes,' I answered, in a sort of careless manner, but feeling inwardly a pang of sorrow, as if Julia Ormsby's acquaintance would prove fatal to me.

"Several days passed without my seeing him, and Julia and I became great friends. She constantly talked of him to me, and showed much more of her own feelings than I did to her; in fact, I never broached the subject, unless she began.

"'I am glad,' she said to me one day, 'that you do not care for him, or I should have been dreadfully

jealous; for although I have seen so many men in my life, none ever made so indelible an impression on my heart as he has done, unknown as he is to me.'

"One day as we were riding together, her horse shied, and she was thrown off. At the same moment appeared the unknown; he jumped down—for he too was riding—and raised her; she had fainted, and I sat on a bank to hold her head on my knees, whilst our groom went in quest of the doctor, who luckily lived not far off. Julia soon came to herself again, and when Mr. Notburn arrived, he examined her, and said she had been more frightened than hurt, but she had better not mount her horse again, and he volunteered to go to the Hall and order my carriage.

"I am afraid I was too happy to wish the accident had not happened. Julia was very profuse in her thanks to him, and shook hands when he left. How I envied her! I am afraid, when he bade me farewell, he must have guessed I longed to do as she had done.

"The next day I heard Miss Ormsby was not well. I called, and found her very much depressed; all her conversation was more or less about her 'saviour,' as she called him.

"As I was slowly wending my way home, I was suddenly accosted by him. Involuntarily I offered my hand; he pressed it cordially, and we walked together. He inquired after Miss Ormsby. How bitter the words fell on my ears; and yet how sweet the voice was, and how much I wished that the walk might never end!

From Julia, the conversation turned on other subjects; he seemed to feel as I did, to like what I liked, and for a moment I forgot all the misery of thinking about Julia's love, to give myself up entirely to the bewitching present. Oh, how I hated the sight of our lodge! We had to part at last, and when I was alone in my room, I flew to my picture, kissing it over and over again, praying that my love might not be scorned.

"'Edith,' said my father, as we met at the library door, 'I have just had a note from old Miss Clayton, asking me to allow her nephew to call upon us; she is very ill, and he has been staying with her for a long time; she thinks it is dreadfully dull for him. You know the Claytons are very old friends of our family, and I have no objection to his coming; you can entertain him when he calls.'

"And he came; Julia was staying with me, and a cry of surprise broke almost simultaneously from our lips when Mr. Clayton was announced, for it was our ideal!

"Which of us would please him the most, or would he feel perfectly indifferent towards us? We were very unlike in face and manners. She was extremely fair, and I was dark—that is to say, my hair only. Her eyes were hazel, and mine violet; as to her features, they were not very regular, but she certainly could pass for being pretty; my features were classical, and whether or no it was because there were no girls about the place to rival me, I was always called the beautiful Miss Allingham. Her manners were generally

lively; she talked merrily, without saying anything very witty, and, upon the whole, was a nice girl. I was more subdued, less chatty; but, notwithstanding my very imperfect knowledge of the world, could keep up a conversation upon any subject without feeling at a loss.

"The Ormsbys had to go to town, and Mr. Clayton became a constant visitor, much to the delight of Dawson, who said he was the husband for me. After a fortnight of daily intercourse, he proposed to me. To describe my happiness would be impossible; no words could express what I felt. We had been walking in the park, and it was there that he had whispered to me what I longed to hear.

"'Let it be my secret for a few days,' I said to him; 'I could not bear any one to know it, and I wish for a while to keep my unbounded happiness all to myself.' Alas! that I should have done so!

"'Very well, my own dearest Edith,' he replied, 'your wishes will always be mine; to make you happy will be my every-day study.'

"As we were coming back towards the house, the footman appeared with a note. I tore it open, and found that the Ormsbys had returned, and Julia was dangerously ill. Mr. Clayton took leave of me, and I started for Newlands. On entering Mrs. Ormsby's sitting-room I found there a gentleman I had never seen; he was introduced at once as Dr. ——, a celebrated London physician.

"'Doctor ——,' said General Ormsby to me,

'wishes to have a private interview with you, Miss Allingham, about my daughter; we will leave you together.'

"When alone, the doctor began cross-examining me about Julia, to my great astonishment.

"'Your friend,' said the man of science, with a grave look, 'is dying; her case is almost baffling me, although I fancy I have a clue to its cause; but as I cannot obtain any answers to my questions, I can do absolutely nothing. Her father and mother have also failed; the only hope now is in you. Pray exert your influence over her, and let me know the result.'

"I went to Julia's room, and her mother soon left us together. A few days had wrought a fearful change: I scarcely knew her. We spoke little at first, then she confided to me—what I had a vague dread of hearing—she was desperately in love with William Clayton, and nothing could save her except the hope of becoming his wife. I could scarcely utter a single word, for despair filled my heart. Still I resolved to wait before telling her the truth, and, after promising to return, I left the room, to speak to Dr. ——. I told him what I had heard.

"'It is an extremely awkward case, Miss Allingham, for it is as unlikely as not that Mr. Clayton cares nothing for her.'

"'He does not,' I said, in a voice I tried, but in vain, to render steady. 'Mr. Clayton is engaged; however, I have said nothing of it to her. But tell me, Dr. ——,' and then my voice was choked with

emotion, 'are there no means to save Miss Ormsby's life otherwise than by her marrying Mr. Clayton?'

"'None, Miss Allingham,' he replied, with his scrutinizing eyes upon me; 'but am I wrong in supposing that you yourself are engaged to Mr. Clayton?'

"'Only a few minutes before opening Mrs. Ormsby's note, I had pledged myself to become Mr. Clayton's wife,' I answered, gasping for breath, and feeling as if death were coming to put an end to my misery.

"'Heaven help us then!' he said with a solemn voice; 'and who will break this news to her?'

"I answered not for awhile; then rising from my chair, I nerved myself to speak, and said: 'Say nothing of what I have told you to any one, and to-morrow you shall hear.'

"I sat up all night with Julia, and now and then the tempter whispered to me: 'She is now in your power; make a mistake in giving her the opiates she takes, and soon she will lie in the grave.' Then the image of my own adored William rose before me, handsomer than ever, and I saw the pale face of Julia standing between us. I shuddered with the awful feelings that filled my heart. 'Oh, if she could but die now,' I said inwardly—'if this were to be her last night upon earth!' And the moon rose in all its brilliant splendour, and threw its cold silvery rays around the couch of the invalid, showing the ravages love had made in this poor girl, and I fell on my knees, praying God to give me strength to go through

so great a trial, and to deliver me from the awful temptations that assailed me.

"At the appointed hour I met Mr. Clayton in a little wood skirting Newlands, and unfolded my tale to him in broken accents. He was thunderstruck at my revelations, and when I had done, he said,—

"'Never! never can I give you up;' and he folded me in his arms, and pressed me to his heart, covering me with kisses.

"'Yet it must be so,' I said, burying my face on his breast, 'I cannot let her die. I prayed God last night to support me through this terrible trial. I do not think she can last long; but, whether or no, I will not be the cause of her death.'

"Long, long did we remain together, with our conflicting feelings and indescribable sorrow and despair; at last we parted, wishing we had never been born.

"I was in time to meet Dr. ——'s carriage coming up the avenue. He alighted, and I told him what I had done, adding that in a short time Mr. Clayton would be at the house. 'Tell Miss Ormsby I am ill,' I continued, 'I can never see her again.' And before he had time to reply, I was flying rather than walking to the Hall.

"I went straight to my father, telling him what had taken place. His astonishment was great; but I begged him not to try to console me, or to shake my resolution; only to allow me to leave the next morning, with Dawson, for the Continent.

"The winter had set in, in northern climes, but I was

sitting at the open window of a charming villa, with the Bay of Sorrento and its blue waves before my eyes, in the sunny south.

"Dawson and I had travelled incessantly since the events I have recorded to you, and it had not soothed my heart; while I dreamed still of the beloved one I had left behind, and though he belonged to another, I could not help cherishing him as much as in days of yore. His adored image was constantly before me, and I fancied he would soon pass and enter our house.—In my father's letters, never any mention was made of the Ormsbys,—it was my every-day dream, and how long, I often wondered, should I have to wait!

"'Here, Miss Edith,' said Dawson one day, entering my room, 'I have brought you *Galignani's Messenger*.'

"The paper remained long unfolded; it was the first I had seen since we had been travelling. What did I care for news? However, mechanically, I opened it; my eyes wandered from sheet to sheet; they were suddenly arrested by a name I knew. Did I dream? No, I was awake, and read: 'On the 9th December, at Penzance, from consumption, Mary Julia Clayton, daughter of General Ormsby, of Newlands,' etc. I knelt down, and prayed that my Willie might return to me.

"Two days afterwards a letter was brought to me announcing the departure from England of my father, accompanied by Sir William Clayton. He had succeeded to a baronetcy at the demise of his uncle. I need not say how I felt! Soon the happy day

dawned for me, and once more I was pressed to the heart of my own adored William. We remained in Italy until his mourning was over, and then we returned to dear old England to be married, at the little old picturesque church of our village. I would not leave Glossop for a wedding tour, for I wished that the happiest days of my life should be spent where I still hope to close my eyes, surrounded by all those I love."

After this narrative, I still felt more interested in our neighbours; and, as Sir William and my husband got on very well together, I was less disinclined to cultivate their acquaintance. Lady Clayton did not like to go on the water, so that my husband and myself continued, as of yore, our lovely rows on the Loire. When we did not intend to go far, we dispensed with the boatmen's attendance, a thing I was always pleased at. We liked the cadenced noise of the oars; the plaintive murmur of the prow, which seemed like a mysterious friendly voice, hidden under the silvery green ripples of the river, following us, as we went slowly along, as if regretting to leave us in this profound solitude; there was an amount of voluptuous charm—a sort of inward happiness—so much peace, that it seemed as if to live upon earth was the plenitude of all that one could wish for. Why is it that one cannot live thus for ever? Why should so much felicity be broken by the every-day-life puerilities of the world? But so it is: hours which one would render eternal, fly minute by minute, bringing

us down from our heavenly dreams on to the rocky shores of cold realities.

Towards the middle of August we accepted the offer of Sir William's gondola to go up the Loire, arriving soon afterwards at Blois, with the view of visiting its castle, which my husband had never seen, and those about that part of the Blesois. The Château de Blois is situated on a triangular eminence, formed by the confluence of the Loire and a rivulet, formerly rather large, which runs obscurely now, under the town.

The base of the triangle is isolated on the declivity of the hillock of the Loire by a large trench. It would be too long and tedious to give here a description of the castle—which, however, abounds in historical reminiscences.

From the observatory of Catherine de Medicis is seen a magnificent panorama formed by the Loire, which spreads at its feet, and whose course unrolls itself to the extent of several leagues, and by the hillocks that border it, covered with vineyards and crowned by dense forests;—Druidical remains of the woods of the ancient city of the "Carnutes." Catherine could not have chosen a better spot for her astrological observations. Above the door of the observatory are engraved these words: "Vraniæ Sacrvm" (consecrated to Urania). It was there that Francis I. in 1536 signed the marriage settlements of Magdeleine de France, his daughter, with James V. of Scotland. The Prince de Condé, the Protestant

leader, when made prisoner, was taken to Blois. The Duc de Guise was assassinated there. Marguerite de Valois' marriage settlements, when she was betrothed to the King of Navarre, were also signed there. Charles II. spent a few days in the castle on his return from the south of France.

On leaving Blois we stopped at the Château de Rougeoux, built by Francis I.: a red pile, by no means pretty; the castle of Courcheverny, whose cupolas peeped from above the trees; then Chambord, with its grand forest. The "escalier du lys" is the most remarkable thing in the building; it is a spiral staircase, at the foot of which two people start together on each side, and only meet at the top, on the little belvedere, where it is said that Louis XIII. was so fond of sitting. It is a pity the country about is so flat and uninteresting. I think it is very much the same all about "la Sologne." Then we visited Amboise, famous for the conspiracy that took place there, about the Guise. Chenonceaux was once the favourite residence of Marguerite de Valois. The kitchens are in the arches of the bridge. A cousin of M. de Meilhan lived there, and we were very well received.

Whilst at Blois, my husband met another relation of his, who gave us such a cordial invitation, that we promised to visit him on leaving "La Maison Blanche."

We returned there about six days before our departure for L——. We were welcomed back by Sir

William and Lady Clayton, who had come to receive us. We had not been able to show them any civilities, on account of the primitive way in which we lived; but we made them promise to pay us a visit at the Hotel de la Fère some time during the winter.

The town of L—— is rather picturesque, and the house where the De Sénantes lived had been once the abode of the beautiful Agnès Sorel, but at the present time it had almost lost all its historical interest; one turret alone remained, recalling her times; the rest had disappeared, and was buried with the past in oblivion. The family were composed of the Comte de Sénante and his wife; Madame de St. Prie, her mother, and two little children. They seemed a remarkably happy family, and I quite enjoyed my visit. There were several noble families in the place, who shone more by their simplicity and good breeding than their riches, and it was always pleasant to meet them.

One evening, when we were seated on the terrace looking down the river, M. de Sénante said to me, —

"Madame de Meilhan, you are now on the very spot where the chapel in which Agnès Sorel was buried, stood."

"Oh," said the Comtesse to me, "if you like ghost stories, my husband will read us one; I must go and fetch it."

"You will greatly please Mathilde," said M. de Meilhan; "she delights in ghosts and witches, though

terribly frightened of them; she must afterwards relate to you one about the Vicomtesse de Chabannes."

"What," said Madame de St. Prie, "is it really true that she still haunts Beaúpré?"

"She certainly did when last we were there, and here is a ring which belonged to her;" and I told them how I had come by it."

"How strange that no one ever knew what became of the Vicomte!" continued M. de Sénante.

"Most marvellous," rejoined my husband, "that not a trace or vestige of him was ever found; but I strongly suspect he escaped to Italy, and lived there under a feigned name."

Madame de Sénante returned, carrying a book, in which were bound two MSS., one yellow with age and almost illegible, and the other looking as if recently copied.

"I found the former MS. among my father's papers," said the Vicomte; "I was going to burn it, for it seemed almost impossible to decipher it; but Yolande, seeing the name of Agnès Sorel, begged me to look over it, and with infinite trouble I was able to make it out. It has been written by an ancestress of ours, which reason made me keep it; and now for the ghost."

And M. de Sénante read the following story:—

"The Ghost of Agnès Sorel, and that of her Royal lover, Charles VII.

"Of all the incidents of my childhood none remains

more forcibly engraved on my memory than that of finding myself in the presence of royalty. I was then only six years old. It was just previous to the siege of La Rochelle, and my father, who had the command of one of the regiments (the King himself being at the head of his army) had been summoned by Louis XIII. to the palace; and as my mother was a great favourite at court, especially with Anne of Austria, the latter had signified her wish she should accompany my father and bring me also with her, before her departure for the province where she intended to reside during the absence of her husband.

"It was perhaps one of the greatest favours ever bestowed upon a child of my age, but somehow I looked upon the whole thing as being quite due to me, and I could not be convinced of the contrary.

"It was not a reception-day, and we were ushered into the presence of their Majesties in the private salon of the Queen. She appeared to me very grand, but not to be compared to my own mamma, who, according to the Cardinal de Richelieu, was the loveliest and best woman upon earth. His Eminence was one of her great admirers, but certainly her reputation never suffered; men admired her silently, for, notwithstanding the charm and urbanity of her manners, none would have dared to breathe a light word in her presence; too much purity and innocence were depicted on her face.

"The King had nothing remarkable in his person, and seemed to express himself with difficulty; I think

he had a defect in his speech; he patted me on the cheek, and said I was a pretty little girl, begging the Queen at the same time to give me some bonbons. Her Majesty graciously beckoned me to her, and presented me with a beautiful bonbonnière, which has remained to me as a precious remembrance of royal condescension.

"The Cardinal, who was present, took a great fancy to me, and called me to his side; I was not at all shy, and had even the audacity to touch the tip of his long moustache; he was much amused, and gave me a kiss, which caused the royal party to laugh, as well as the ladies and noblemen in attendance upon their Majesties. I talked to his Eminence in the most unreserved manner, and he seemed so pleased with me, that the day after my visit at the Tuileries, I received from him a box of most costly playthings.

"Shortly after this event, my father was bidding us farewell,—a farewell which was to be for ever.

"The fearful accounts constantly received of the horrors of the siege of La Rochelle always caused much misery to my mother. Much attached to the Duchesse de Rohan and her daughter, (two noble women, who exhorted the inhabitants not to surrender, encouraging them with hopes of succour, which had been promised from England, and who made them hold their position to the last, though famine and misery surrounded them,) although of different persuasions, she lamented for them as much as she did for my father, who, however, at the time, was not so badly off as the besieged.

"Such were my mother's sufferings that she feared she would not be long for this world, and she took me herself to a convent at Poitiers. It had been founded by a most pious queen, Sainte Radégonde, who retired there to end her days. Her tomb is still to be seen in the crypt of an old church, which bears the name of the queen. Miracles, it is said, are performed by the saint, and a number of votaries are constantly seen about the shrine.

"My mother's younger sister was then at the convent, which decided the former to place me under her care, for fear she should die before my father's return. I was not at all aware of the dismal thoughts which had taken possession of her; and upon her promise to come and see me very soon, I consented to remain with my aunt. What a contrast in face she was to my mother! No one had ever appeared uglier to me than my aunt Batilde; for days I could not bear to look up into her face; she had perceived it, but did not seem to be offended, and never offered to kiss me.

"But if she were ugly, her mien was most majestic, and the sweetness of her voice reminded me of that of my beautiful mother. I had only been a month at Poitiers when the latter died; no one had expected her death, and the blow I felt, when my aunt Batilde told me, well nigh killed me. This most sad event had the effect of drawing me more closely to my aunt, and we became inseparable. During the recreations we used to go and sit on the steps of a

small chapel at the end of the garden, and there she related to me some legends of the saints, which interested me very much; and then she would talk of my mother, and it always ended by both of us shedding tears. I never thought my aunt ugly after this, for her kindness to me was unbounded.

"The death of my darling mother was very soon followed by that of my father, who was killed the day before the troops entered the city. The messenger who brought us the news gave a heart-rending description of the horrors of the siege. It was said that out of fifteen thousand persons who were in the city at the beginning of the siege, four thousand only had survived. The streets and houses were infected with putrid bodies, for the inhabitants were much too weak to bury the dead. They had lived at first upon horseflesh, but gradually the supplies had ceased, and all the horrors of famine began, and lasted till Louis XIII. entered the city. The next day a most violent storm arose, which lasted several days, and raged with unabated violence, burying under the waves the mole which, it is said, caused the ruin of La Rochelle.

"From the will of my father it was found that my grandmamma, the Baronne de St. Méran, was to act conjointly with the Comte de Sénante, who had been appointed my guardian. I had never seen the Baronne, nor the Comte either, but I cared little for them, and looked upon my aunt and all the other nuns as those with whom I should probably end my days.

"There were two most miserable events to me every year in my convent life,—that of having to write to my grandmamma and to my guardian,—on New Year's Day to both of them, and to the Baronne on Saint's day; it always ended in my being sent to bed, for no coaxing could make me do it properly. My aunt used to laugh at first, then her patience became exhausted, and I was marched off in disgrace to my cell, where, having made up my mind to hate both the Comte and the Baronne, I used eventually to cry myself to sleep.

"On New Year's Eve I received from my grandmamma a new outfit for the year, and two enormous pâtés, one of which I had to present to the Abbess, and the other I enjoyed with two other girls—orphans like myself. Le Comte de Sénante never omitted to send me a box of toys, until I grew older, and sweetmeats in abundance—which presents, however, did not reconcile me to the task of having to write to him.

"Fourteen years passed away without my having ever once passed the gates of the convent. I was then twenty, and my guardian wrote to announce his intention of coming to see me. How much I dreaded his visit could not be expressed. I had figured to myself such another old man as our chaplain (never having seen any other man in the place except the gardener). At last the terrible day arrived, and my aunt conducted me to the grating herself; but I could not repress a cry of surprise on seeing the Comte, which made him and my aunt heartily laugh.

"He was tall, and had a splendid figure; he did not look above thirty, although a good deal older; his features were beautiful, and altogether it would have been difficult to find any one more pleasant and kind than he seemed to be. The conversation was entirely between him and my aunt, to whom he announced that I was to be removed from the convent and go to live with my grandmamma, who was to reside at my house until I married.

"Had the Baronne written herself to that effect, I would have refused at once; but so taken was I with the Comte de Sénante that I did not make the slightest objection, and he arranged that in less than a week two waiting-women should come, and he would himself accompany me to L——.

"The first excitement of this interview over, I became very desponding. To leave all the good nuns, and my aunt especially, was, as I found then, more than I could bear, and had it not been for M. de Sénante coming to fetch me, I should have remained and taken the veil, as my two other friends were going to do. But my aunt would have been against it; she thought I was too well endowed with worldly goods and beauty to shut myself up in a convent.

"It was not without shedding many tears that I bade farewell to the convent of St. Radégonde; and its inmates, and leaving my good aunt Batilde was a great trial to me.

"The journey was very long, yet appeared nothing to me, so kind was M. de Sénante. My two attend-

ants never left me, and nothing could have been more proper than our travelling arrangements.

"I felt very strange sensations in approaching the little town of L——. My dear father and my beautiful mother were no more; and from the description of the Baronne by M. de Sénante, I dreaded the meeting, which would have been so different had my parents lived.

"It was intensely cold; thick snow covered the ground, and I expected as freezing a reception from Madame de St. Méran as that I received from the weather on reaching my native town, after so many years of absence;—it chilled me to the very heart.

"In an immense salon sat a thin-looking lady, who might have been taken rather for a ghost than for a living being. She was clad in deep mourning, which gave to her wan pale face an unearthly look. At our entrance she rose, and after a low courtesy to the Comte de Sénante, she pressed her icy lips to my forehead, and immediately ordered my women to conduct me to my room. Everything looked so dismal, so strange, the air so chilly in those large apartments, that I could almost have cried; but I had not much time to give way to my grief, being almost immediately summoned to dinner. The dining-room was a very sombre apartment; at the top stood a canopy with two arm-chairs raised upon an 'estrade.' In the left sat the Baronne, the right being left vacant, as was the custom, if the master of the house were abroad or dead. On the left hand the Comte de Sénante took his seat, and I opposite them.

"Strange to my sight was that dinner. The heavy silver dishes and silver cups looked marvellously beautiful, but I could not imagine why there should be such a display of viands for only us three. The meal passed off very silently, and we soon adjourned to the salon, where my grandmamma took up some tapestry work, whilst M. de Sénante and I sat a little way off, near the huge fireplace, in which blazed an enormous log of wood. My guardian gave me some accounts of the siege of La Rochelle and of the death of my father, in which recital the Baronne seemed to take a little interest.

"As soon as the dusky shades of evening darkened the already gloomy room, Madame de St. Méran apologized to the Comte, and retired for the purpose (as was her wont) of going to pray in the chapel for about an hour. Her exit seemed to lighten my spirits and unloose my tongue, and I began to talk freely to my guardian.

"'How sorry I am you are going to leave us, M. de Sénante! Do you think I shall be able to exist with my ghostly grandmamma?—she seems so cold and unearthly.'

"'You must try and make the best of it, Mademoiselle. You will soon marry, probably, and then I know it is the wish of the Baronne to go to the Carmélites de Tours to end her days.'

"'But I shall never see a soul here; I shall mope to death. I wish you had left me with my aunt; I never can love my grandmamma.'

"'I followed to the letter the last wishes of your father; but, should you feel unhappy, should your life here be unbearable, you must send me a letter, and I will at once come to you; you will always find me ready to obey your commands.'

"'It is kind of you, Monsieur; and you promise me you will come immediately and take me away from the Baronne, if I do not like her?'

"'To take you away,' said he, smiling, 'would be impossible, unless you gave me the right of doing so; at all events, wherever I am, I shall make a point of coming at your bidding.'

"The next day, after breakfast, the Comte left us, and I felt I had lost my only friend.

"The house we inhabited formed one part of the castle where Agnès Sorel, the queen of beauty, and her royal lover, once dwelt. The east tower still bears her name; and it is said from her windows she often watched to see the king returning from hunting. Built upon a rock, the view from all parts of the castle (for in reality it could not be called anything else) was magnificent, especially from the Agnès tower, which I chose for my own apartment. To reach it, after leaving the grand staircase, I had to pass through a long open gallery, at the end of which a dark winding flight of steps led to the rooms. One was my bedroom, opening into a tiny turret, where I liked to sit and work, and above was another for my waiting-women. At the bottom of the stairs a vaulted door opened into the chapel, where the tomb

of the beautiful Agnès was, (though it was said she had not been buried there). She was represented lying on a sarcophagus, with angels at her head and lambs at her feet. Other tombs were scattered about; that of the 'beau Dunois,' and other grim warriors whose names had not been transmitted to posterity. Madame de St. Méran had been against my inhabiting that part of the house; however, as I showed a very strong will in the matter, she had to yield.

"I had only been at L—— three days, when I discovered that the uniformity of my life would be far more tedious than that I had led in the convent. The Baronne went to bed early, and I had to retire at the same time; but, after dismissing my women, I sat by the fire to indulge in recollections of the past, or, more often, in dreams of the future.

"On the third night I had scarcely laid my head on the pillow when the clock of the neighbouring church boomed its twelve melancholy sounds, which were wafted to me through the icy night air. A small lamp, suspended from the ceiling, was burning, shedding a fitful glimmer over the room, and blending with the still cheerful blaze of the fire. One curtain of the alcove was drawn, but I had a full view of the door and of the fireplace. All at once a sort of rustling noise seemed to come from the stairs, the door slowly opened, and two figures, shrouded in white, entered. My nerves were too strong to allow me to be frightened, and I gazed with intense curiosity on the two forms before me; they stood very near

the fire, and, without any effort or movement from their owners, the winding-sheets fell to the ground, revealing the features of a woman and those of a man in a kingly garb: could it be that these two were the ghosts of Charles VII. and of his fair mistress? Certainly the dress was that of the period in which they lived, and as they were represented in the picture gallery. I felt convinced it must be them; the head-dress alone was wanting. The fair Agnès had her hair over her shoulders, and that of the king was closely shaved. He passed one of his arms round her waist, whilst the left hand of Agnès Sorel rested on the king's shoulder; the right grasped the hand of Charles, and she looked in his face with eyes full of grief, but withal of love; both faces were deadly pale, such as could never be seen on this side of the grave. They gazed upon one another for a considerable time with looks of intense sorrow, mingled with unmistakable love. My eyes were riveted upon them; no scene had ever delighted my mind so much as that I was witnessing; I wished it could have lasted for ever. I revelled in this ghostly meeting, and longed to hear them talk, longed to hear loving words exchanged between them, but they were as silent as the tomb from which they had come forth. And yet surely there must have been happiness in meeting thus, even for one fleeting moment, however agonizing might be the thoughts of the past!

"It was only the day before, I had heard the real history of Agnès Sorel, for in our convent such themes

were never broached upon; but my maids had told me the story, and I felt surpassingly interested in both personages. Then I thought, was it not as a punishment they were allowed to return upon earth? Where did they go when they left this world; did they remain inside those cold monuments, whilst the light of day lasted, to roam afterwards in the gloaming? I could not possibly answer the questions which I asked myself, and continued to gaze on the luckless pair with immense interest. Soon the king bent his head and imprinted a kiss on the brow of his mistress, at which she seemed to shudder. He raised the shroud from the ground and tenderly wrapt her in it, then covering himself with his own, they left the room hand in hand.

"Should I see them again; would they come night after night, to hold their strange, but to me most deeply interesting meeting? I could not say, but I hoped that it might be so. Long was it before I closed my eyes, and I promised myself not to divulge to any one what I had seen, resolving the next night to sit up until after twelve.

"The following morning I went alone to the chapel and examined everything closely. The cold marble statues were resting in peace, and the sweet face of Agnès Sorel spoke of neither sorrow nor pain.

"The Baronne de St. Méran and I did not agree very well together; she was austere in the extreme; far, far more so than the good nuns with whom I had spent so many happy years. She received scarcely

any one, and never went out except to visit an old friend of hers who was blind, and for whom she entertained the greatest affection. This lady had a son, the only man my grandmother looked upon as worthy of her regard; and she cherished in her heart a scheme which, had I been a dutiful and obedient child, would certainly have made me Madame de Dreux; but nothing on earth would have forced me into this marriage, and I resolved to fight against it in every possible way.

"The winter had passed away, leaving no traces of either happiness or sorrow in my dull, monotonous life, and the spring, with its clouds and bright beams of sunshine, had at last set in. There is scarcely any time of the year in which a few weeks effect a greater change in the appearance of nature; and with the change in the atmosphere, the soft air and the carolling of the birds, all so soothing to the mind, my heart seemed to open to the impressions of nature, and to be inspired with gladness. The image of M. de Sénante became more vivid, and in my solitary ramblings on the terrace, and especially under the lime-trees, already leafy and meeting overhead, I found myself, over and over again, giving way to day-dreams, in which the Comte always had a part. It was about this time that Madame de St. Méran began to annoy me about M. de Dreux. He was nearly fifty, tall, thin, and ugly; his only redeeming point was his polished manners; his conversation was dull, and I do not suppose that a smile ever played

on his lips. I hated him, and determined to wage war with my grandmamma, should she try and force me to marry him.

"I remembered the promise of my guardian, and made up my mind to write to him. How different were the feelings this time from those I had at the convent, when I had to compose an epistle of 'jour de l'an' for him! The note was very short, but to the purpose, and I entrusted our old major-domo with it. The hours seemed days and the days months until his arrival.

"Madame de Dreux (and how thankful I felt for it!) was very ill; Madame de St. Méran had gone to see her, and I had been left as free as the birds of the air. I had roamed about the place all day, and feeling somewhat tired, had stepped into the drawing-room, the windows of which opened on to the terrace, when I heard the galloping of horses, and a loud ringing announced visitors. Could it be the Comte? Breathless I waited, and a few minutes afterwards M. de Sénante, looking handsomer and more charming than ever, entered. I extended both hands to him, forgetting in my delight that it was against 'les convenances.'

"'You see, Mademoiselle, that I have obeyed your summons,' said he, pressing both my hands in his, and imprinting a kiss on the one he had not released from his grasp.

"'It is so kind of you, Monsieur, to have come;' and I poured all my woes into his willing ears.

"'But do you love any one?' he said, looking at me with his soft eyes.

"'I love you, Monsieur de Sénante, and can never love any one else,' I answered, with all the artlessness of my nature.

"'You love me, Madeleine! Have I heard you right, and will you not repeat again what I have longed to hear from your own lips?' And in finishing these words he had drawn me towards him, looking at me as if wishing to read my very soul.

"This scene had not been without witnesses, and behind us stood the Baronne, leaning on the arm of M. de Dreux.

"'And have I lived to this day," said Madame de St. Méran, 'to see my granddaughter forget herself thus!'

"'Madame la Baronne,' interrupted the Comte, 'it was the wish of your son that Mademoiselle de St. Méran should become my wife; however, I would not influence her, and left to time what I lived in hope of obtaining. To-day I have heard from her own lips that her love is mine, and no power on earth will separate us.'

"A glance of intense malice and hatred shone in M. de Dreux's eyes, whilst the Baronne seemed paralysed with our audacity.

"'Pray leave us, M. de Dreux,' said the Baronne; 'to-morrow I will see you,' and she sank into her arm-chair, covering her face with her hands.

"Ten minutes after she rose, phantom-like, as usual, and ordered me to my room.

"'Of course you remain here, M. de Sénante?' I said, with a tone which implied that I was mistress of the castle, and meant to act accordingly.

"'Certainly, my dear Madeleine, and to-morrow we will make our arrangements for the future.'

"I made a low bow to the Baronne, offered my hand to the Comte, who pressed it to his lips, saying, 'À demain, chère Madeleine, à demain:' and I retired to my tower.

"Happy as I was, my dreams, nevertheless, were mostly of trouble. During the last of them, I fancied I heard a cry, and I woke; it haunted me so that I got up and descended to the gallery.

"The night was rather dark, and for a few moments I remained under the arch. The gallery formed an immense angle, at the end of which I perceived a shadow disappearing by a narrow flight of steps leading to the courtyard. A horrible thought shot through my mind: the shadow was tall, like M. de Dreux, and the Comte's room was where I had seen the former coming out. I rushed into the chapel, took the lamp, and directed my steps towards M. de Sénante's apartment. The door was wide open; I entered, and approached the bed; a dagger was up to the hilt in my guardian's body; the blood flowed from the wound, and he seemed dead. I instantly drew off the weapon, staunching the blood as well as I could, then remembering that Madame de St. Méran was a most skilled leech, I returned to wake her; but fearing further treachery, I locked

the door, taking the key with me, and ran to my grandmother.

"Notwithstanding all her faults, I knew that she was incapable of countenancing such a horrible deed, and she readily complied with my request. I returned to M. de Sénante's room, and soon Madame de St. Méran recalled him to life. The dagger had passed through the ribs and not through the heart, as was probably the design of the assassin.

"Both the Baronne and myself remained with him until morning, when I positively refused to leave the room, and she had to send one of my women to stop with me. It was long before M. de Sénante recovered, for his loss of blood had been very great.

"This sad event had the effect of drawing us still closer together, and of increasing our love tenfold.

"As soon as he was restored to health, our marriage was solemnized in the haunted chapel, and there I made the vows to love and cherish unto death the only man for whom my heart ever beat.

"M. de Sénante refused to prosecute M. de Dreux, who, indeed, had left the place altogether, and Madame de St. Méran bade us an eternal farewell, to go and bury herself in a Carmélite convent."

I was much interested with this story, and as the evening shadows were falling, I almost fancied I could see flitting before us the shadowy forms of the ghosts. The light breezes, which crossed from time to time the still air, seemed loaded with harmonious sighs, and brought to me the names of Charles and

Agnès. I had almost forgotten where I was till I heard the suppressed laughter of my friends, who were much amused at my fondness for ghosts.

Whilst we were at L——, Madame la Marquise de St. Ange, mother of Laure, whom we had visited at her convent, stopped on her way to D——. She insisted on our coming to pay her a visit, and we gladly accepted the invitation, as I began to feel perfectly at home with my new relations, whose treatment of me was very different to that of the proud Marguerite and her mother.

M. de Meilhan had made me promise to abstain from any discussions about Bonaparte, and they had the delicacy to speak little about the man to whom I owed all my good luck and happiness.

At the time much was said about the intended war against Russia; all those I heard speak of it were against it; in my inward soul, I blamed the Emperor's unbounded ambition, but I remained silent.

We soon left the De Sénantes, and with regret, for they were both charming people, and Madame de St. Prie was not less so. I had the pleasure of meeting there the Princesse de Poix, la Marquise de la Bourdonnaye, la Marquise de Ponars—who became suddenly blind on hearing about the death of Louis XVI.,—la Marquise de Bridieu, and several other charming women, whose remembrance is still fresh in my memory. P—— was then one of the most aristocratic of the French towns. The part called St. Hilaire abounded with the nobility who had

escaped the guillotine. It was a very dull place after L——, for the streets were narrow, ill-paved, for the most part hilly, and lined on both sides with the gloomiest-looking houses; there were also numberless convents. From morning till night, few hours passed without the sound of some dull bell, belonging to one or the other convent, being heard. M. de St. Ange's house was very large, but if gloomy outside, nothing could have been more lively than the inside; the furniture, indeed, was very sombre, but the inmates were all kind, amiable, well-bred, and witty, and I do not think I ever spent a dull minute during the day.

Madame de St. Ange was almost plain; but her smile was beaming with kindness, and her elegance of manners surpassed all I had hitherto seen. Her husband was most courtly, and possessed the same noble qualities as his wife. There were also the father and mother of Madame de St. Ange,—two charming old people, as full of life as any of us; and lastly the lively Laure and her brother, much younger than herself. We took a great fancy to one another, Paul and I; and although he was only fourteen, he was as devoted a *cavaliere servente* to me as if he had been twenty.

It is rare to see in any country—certainly it was then—the amount of good-will and happiness reigning among French families, especially in the higher classes. The respect of the children to their parents is something remarkable, and never did I see a mocking smile or hear an unkind remark about what the elderly

members of the family said or did; the deference shown to them was extreme, and most pleasing to see.

Laure was going to be married to the Baron de Monbel. I did not care for him at first, but I soon learnt to appreciate his good qualities. He was by no means handsome, and I thought him a little too old for our fair young cousin, yet she loved him greatly, and had herself chosen him from among the many who had offered their hands.

Our mode of life was quiet, and in the meantime pleasant. About eight o'clock in the morning chocolate was brought to the bedrooms, and at eleven we all assembled for breakfast, after which we repaired either to the billiard-room, or to the pavilion—a cool shady room, where we chatted, worked, read, or drew, as it pleased us. In the afternoon, if not too warm, there were always callers. At five o'clock we dined, and afterwards either drove or walked for a few hours; then on returning we generally sat on the terrace, which commanded an extensive view of the country beyond, the house being situated very high, and we had then a constant flow of visitors. At ten refreshments were served, and sometimes until midnight we remained out of doors, breathing the fresh balmy air, which was so grateful after the unusually warm days we had. The conversation was always very agreeable, many witty men and women forming our society; and there was not that intolerable talk about dress, which, with some women, is the constant topic of conversation. Though I dislike it, I must, however, give a descrip-

tion of the bride's toilette, whose wedding took place about a week after our arrival. She wore a dress of white silk worked with silver,—in which her mother had been presented to the lovely but luckless Marie Antoinette; her veil was of silk gauze, and she wore in her hair the usual orange flowers. Though her jewels were very beautiful, she only wore a pearl necklace with bracelets to match. All the other ladies were simply dressed. The "demoiselle d'honneur," or bridesmaid, was a lovely girl, a convent friend of Laure's, remarkable for her simplicity. She had on an embroidered Indian muslin dress, without a single jewel. One little girl offered the "pain bénit"—(in the Roman Catholic Church, at the marriage ceremony, there is a large cake, which is blessed by the priest; children are generally chosen to carry the lighted taper to the altar railings, where the officiating priest recites the prayers). She was a Countess in her own right, and seemed remarkably proud of it; it was said that she was destined to become a Chanoinesse, and she lived almost entirely at the Chapître of Rémiremont, with her aunt, the Marquise Louise de Marvilliers. She looked very pretty in her pink silk dress, and was extremely graceful. The "poêle" (canopy or pall) held over the bride and bridegroom was of rich satin, embroidered with gold, trimmed with a golden fringe, and held by the Marquis de la Haye, "garçon d'honneur," le Prince de Poix, le Vicomte de St. Laurent, and le Marquis de Monchall. The Bishop performed the

ceremony. After it was over a very simple *déjeûner* was given, and then a splendid dinner, followed by a ball, to which the whole nobility of P——were invited. The ladies were all simply but tastefully dressed, avoiding as much as possible the style of the Empire; many wore absolutely no jewels; others—but they were few—wore magnificent ones. Madame de St. Ange told me that most of the women had been obliged to sell their gems in order to live, after the Revolution. The next day was passed much in the same way as the previous one, except that in the evening we had a concert. M. and Madame de Monbel remained at home; in fact, they were to live there altogether. My friend Paul teazed the little Comtesse Marie most unmercifully; he constantly begged her to accept him for her husband; but she perfectly spurned the idea, and always said to him, with the greatest amount of disdain: "Remember, sir, that a Chanoinesse does not marry." I never met with so haughty a child; yet she was amiable and most gracious to those she loved. A few evenings after the wedding the old Marquise de la Haye gave a charming ball in honour of Laure's marriage, and we were very much surprised to see the Bishop enter in the midst of it, followed by his Grand Vicaire.

"You are astonished to see me coming amongst you now," said Monseigneur, "but I have just heard that a dreadful inundation of the Rhône has devastated much of the country in the region where it took

place; and therefore I come, not to disturb your festivities, but to beg of you all who are now joyful and happy, to open your hearts and your purses for the sake of those who are homeless, or dying with hunger, pain, and sorrow." It was a most remarkable thing, that not one woman in the room had a jewel on, except rings, and they had no money with them; the gentlemen only were able to respond to the wish of the Bishop; but we all promised to send our alms the next day to the Evêché.

A beautiful girl, Mademoiselle Alix de Chivry, with the face of a Madonna, held the purse which the Bishop had brought with him, while he led her from one person to another to receive the money. The young Baron de Charnisey—rather a wild young man—said, as he dropped a golden coin in the purse of the pretty "quêteuse":—"Pour vos beaux yeux, Mademoiselle."

"Et maintenant pour les pauvres, Monsieur," she replied, with downcast eyes.

Monsieur de Charnisey smiled, and dropped another napoléon in the purse.

A few days after the ball above-mentioned, I was present at a most heart-rending ceremony, of which I must give a description. There was to be a taking of the veil, strange to say, at the same convent where Madame de Sénante, who related the story of Agnès Sorel's ghost, had been brought up, so that I felt deeply interested in going there. The Abbess was an old friend of Madame de St. Ange, and although no

strangers were to be admitted, we were both excepted from this rule, and had the best places in the chapel.

Mademoiselle Arlette de Bois-du-lys was the name of the nun. At eighteen she had been asked in marriage by one of the handsomest, best, and most nobly born men in the province of V——; but his poverty was so great that M. de Bois-du-lys refused him his daughter, who was equally poor. She obeyed her father's command without a murmur, but left the paternal roof to go and bury herself in the convent of St. Radegonde. She was related to the Abbess, and found no difficulty in entering the gloomy mansion where her unfortunate love led her. Her sorrow was great, for she loved M. de Parthenay well. Whether she forgot him in her solitude, nobody knew, but the time had arrived when she was to take the veil, and she still persisted in her resolution. The ceremony was to take place on the Sunday; and having not yet seen the Cathedral, Madame de St. Ange proposed that we should go there to high mass, and from thence walk to the convent, which was not far distant.

We were received by the "sœur tourière," who rang a bell, and a "sœur converse" came to take us to the apartment of the Abbess. The little sitting-room in which we were received was not so very austere-looking as I expected. There were two or three tolerably good paintings, two arm-chairs, a magnificently carved crucifix, and a few little statuettes of virgins and saints, and vases filled with

flowers. The Abbess was seated in an uncomfortable, hard-looking chair, placed before a table covered with books and papers, which completed the furniture. We waited about five minutes, then the reverend mother emerged from the adjoining room; she was a remarkably fine and pleasing-looking woman, with the most aristocratic manners and majestic mien; she bowed gracefully to me, and kissed Madame de St. Ange.

"You must take some refreshment," she said, immediately, "before we go to vêspers; there will be a collation after the ceremony is over, but it would be too long for you to wait until then;" and saying these words, she rang a hand-bell; the same sister who had ushered us in appeared, and after receiving the Abbess's orders, soon returned with a tray full of cakes and fruits.

"Is Monseigneur going to be here?" said Madame de St. Ange.

"Oh yes, and we have a Dominican to preach the sermon; they say he is one of the most remarkable men of the day. It was through our good father chaplain that we have this fortune. I believe he will preach one sermon at the cathedral to-morrow evening, and one at St. Hilaire the next, so you will be able to hear him again."

"And how is Mademoiselle de Bois-du-lys?"

"Very well; perfectly happy."

"Perfectly happy, my dear mother!" said Madame de St. Ange, with a sad smile; "can you, do you believe it?"

"Why not?" replied the reverend mother; "Arlette has made up her mind to it, and I have not seen any signs of regret on her face. At all events, if she be not happy now, it will come; Time, the great destroyer of feelings, whether of sorrow or of happiness, will awaken in her what it has awakened in others; and besides, with God's assistance, she will win the victory——; but there is the vesper bell," she said, rising; "we must go to the chapel."

We followed "la mère Marie de Jésus" through a dark passage, where we met nuns, coming out of their cells; then going down a narrow and equally dark staircase, we were soon at the chapel door.

The sun was still pouring its warm rays into the chapel, which was gaily decorated; it was lined on both sides with stalls for the nuns and benches for the pupils. A Prie-Dieu covered with velvet faced the altar railings; it was for the victim. The Abbess took us to the stalls nearer the altar, and bending before it went to her own, the first at the entrance door. One by one came the nuns; some old, some young, and others of middle age. There were no cares depicted on their faces; on the contrary, there was a placid calm, which would have made one believe that all were happy. Then came the novices and postulantes; and last of all, about twenty girls, all dressed in white, with blue sashes and white veils, walked two and two along the nave: as soon as the last had entered, a nun struck a book she had in her hand, the girls courtesied to the altar, and turned into their

benches. In the small gallery several other girls and nuns took their places, to lead the singing, and almost immediately after the Bishop, with his "grand vicaire" and two other priests, entered.

A few minutes elapsed; then the chaplain intoned the "Dixit Dominus," which was sung alternately, first by the right side, then by the left, without music, as were also the psalms which constitute vespers. I must confess I did not pay much attention to the service; I felt attracted by the faces on the opposite side, of fresh young girls, looking perfectly happy, and although in the chapel, almost merry, being evidently entertained by the sight of strange faces. In the outer chapel were some people who could but imperfectly see through two gratings what was going on inside.

As soon as the psalms were over, the sonorous voice of the Abbess was heard saying, "Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis et amoris": all the nuns then got up, and with a sort of nasal sound took up a part alternately, as had been done during the singing. At each "Gloria Patri" they faced each other and bowed. Then another voice said, alone: "Nunc dimittis servum tuum," and in a short time the Office de la Vièrge was over.

A minute or two before this the Dominican had entered the chapel, in the same way as the Bishop had done; he knelt before the altar, and ascended the pulpit, where he knelt down again and remained praying until the Bride of Heaven arrived.

I had been so struck by the appearance of the Dominican, that I scarcely observed the entrance of the nun, for which Madame de St. Ange had been watching. She slightly touched me; I looked towards the door, and saw such a sight that even now, years after the event, I can still see the lovely face of the luckless Arlette. She sailed along the middle of the chapel like a glorious sun, full of radiance and beauty, but, alas! also with deep sadness depicted over her every feature. She was dressed in white satin; her head was covered with a long tulle veil, and an aigrette of diamonds, in which orange blossoms were entwined, fastened it on the top; a diamond necklace and bracelets of the same, with a bouquet of orange and myrtle flowers, completed her toilet. But to describe the face is a task almost beyond me. I have rendered those lovely features on canvas pretty accurately, but whatever I could write about it would be useless: the charm was in the *tout-ensemble;* her eyes were of a deep blue, with long brown lashes fringing the lids; the Grecian nose was faultless; the mouth a perfect Cupid's bow, with lips of the purest vermilion; and a flood of golden hair fell in large waves around the alabaster brow, and partially hid the lovely swan-like neck of the sweetest being that ever trod the earth. She was above the middle height, her figure was perfectly symmetrical, her mien graceful, with a certain amount of majesty. I had admired Sister Madeleine—who by-the-bye, died, shortly after my visit—as well as

Oléa de B——, but I am obliged to give the palm to Arlette, or Sister Emrance, as she was known in the convent. She walked slowly up the nave, with downcast eyes, followed by two nuns, and took the chair placed for her. She knelt down and prayed until the melodious voice of the monk was heard repeating the words, "In nomine Patris et Filiis," etc., when a sudden shudder seemed to pass through her frame; she started to her feet, then without looking up, sank down again on her chair, whiter than the driven snow. While I had been looking at her, I had lost the text, and scarcely heard the exordium, pronounced in rather a low voice, which, gradually growing more loud, I soon forgot Arlette, so entranced was I with the burning eloquence of the monk. My eyes were riveted upon his face,—a face that is only seen once in a lifetime; it was perfectly angelic, and yet on every line could be traced the vigour of a powerful mind, as soon as the subject took a sterner turn. Nothing could be more brilliant, no style more sublime. I had read Bourdaloue, Fénélon, Massillon, and Bossuet, but it seemed to me that the monk surpassed even "l'Aigle de Meaux." His voice, his flowers of rhetoric, his delivery, surpassed all I had ever heard, not only in France, but in other countries. In the middle of the discourse it was like an impetuous torrent, or the roaring thunder; his eyes flashed like lightning, he seemed carried away from earth by his own eloquence into unknown regions. Then gradually

the loud ringing voice sank to soft melodious accents of peace and love; and he addressed himself entirely to the nun. Slowly she raised her eyes from the ground, and turned towards the pulpit; then a stifled cry rose to her lips, she stood up, extending her arms to the preacher, her trembling voice murmured the name of Henri, and she sank on her knees, covering her face with her white symmetrical hands, while burning tears flowed through the fingers, falling down like raindrops upon the stony floor. A murmur of astonishment was heard through the silence which had reigned in the chapel. I looked up to the pulpit; the monk was slowly descending the steps, rigidly as a marble statue, and he soon disappeared from our sight. Several minutes of strange suspense slowly passed, during which the Marquise whispered to me:—'It is Henri de Parthenay, Arlette's lover!'

I had guessed as much from the beginning, when I saw the nun's shudder. The nuns who had accompanied Mademoiselle de Bois-du-lys soon came to her and led her to the altar, where the Bishop was awaiting her. He asked her several questions, to which she replied in a tremulous voice; she then threw her bouquet behind her, indicating her renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, and she received piece by piece the articles of the dress which was sealing her fate for ever. Each thing she had, passed to the attendant nuns, her veil was then removed, and one of them, armed with

scissors, cut off the golden locks of the fair and unhappy victim, and took her away into the vestry; she was then dressed, and soon returned in her new garb, looking more dead than alive. She was laid on the side altar steps; a mortuary shroud was thrown over her, and the "De profundis clamavi" was intoned and chanted by the whole congregation—as terribly mournful a dirge as ever was sent to the throne of the Almighty. This sad ceremony over, she rose; the nuns led her back to her seat, and the Sacrament was administered by the Bishop. The "Laudate omnes gentes," and the "Salutaris ostia" were prettily and merrily sung. As soon as it was over, the nuns and the pupils retired, la Mère Marie de Jésus came to take Sœur Emrance away, and a sister signed to us to follow her.

On leaving the chapel we were conducted to a refectory where the Bishop, priests, nuns, and pupils were assembled, to do honour to the collation, which was tastefully laid out.

Not a word was spoken about the event, and it was only when we returned to the Abbess's room that we allowed ourselves to mention the subject.

"'It was a most unlucky thing,' said the reverend mother; 'evidently the monk knew nothing of Sister Emrance having entered this convent, or he would not have come. I fancy no one knew what had become of him. I am desired by the Bishop to beg that you will not mention anything about it. The other people could not hear, and could scarcely

see what passed. If it were known, it would probably prevent his preaching to-morrow.'

"'And how is the poor young thing?' said Madame de St. Ange.

"'I took her to her cell at once, to rest and quiet her mind a little. I am afraid it has been too much for her, and I grieve to say that we shall have to punish her for example's sake. But the punishment will be slight, for Monseigneur does not approve of severity.'

"'Cruel, too cruel, Blanche,'—a name which recalled the past to the nun,—said the Marquise; 'has your heart grown so cold, so unimpressionable that you cannot feel for Arlette? Does our Saviour exact so much from those who serve Him, that such intense misery should be a cause of heartless punishment?'

"'My dear friend,' said the Abbess, 'my heart is not insensible to misfortune; I pity my poor Arlette, for I love her; perhaps more than I ought to do. Our life here is one of self-denial, and worldly love must entirely disappear within these walls. She is of my own blood, and that is one reason for which I cannot show myself too lenient; but I promise you she shall not suffer much; I will lessen the punishment the chapter will give her as much as lies in my power. But I must leave you now:' she kissed us both, and we were led out. We left the convent with sorrowful hearts for the poor suffering beings we had so much admired.

The next day the Cathedral was crowded to excess;

even the Parvis was full. La Marquise de Traversay, who lived near, had kindly kept us places. We made up a very large party to go and hear the wonderful preacher. We sat nearly opposite the pulpit, and had as good a view of him as on the previous day. If possible, the oratorical powers of the Dominican surpassed those of the previous day. The sermon was upon the Last Judgment, and such a masterpiece of eloquence I believe was never heard before. The reality of the picture was fearful; the whole thing was vividly brought before our eyes, and sobs were heard on all sides. The sermon lasted an hour and a half, and yet to me it had not seemed many minutes; I would willingly have listened double the time.

The following evening, the Dominican's voice was heard, as sonorous and as melodious as ever, in the old Church of St. Hilaire. The sermon this time was upon the forgiveness of sins; it was perfectly beautiful. The same eloquence, the same vigour pervaded it throughout, but there was more gentleness in the delivery, and the peroration was almost whispered to the auditors. I could not say how much I regretted the departure of the monk, about whom I never heard afterwards. What a pity that such brilliant talents should disappear from the world, to be buried in the dark cell of some monastery!"

We had stayed at P——longer than we had in-
:d doing at first, and when we spoke of leaving,

we were not allowed to think of it; so we remained another fortnight.

A grand ball was to be given at the Préfecture to "la haute bourgeoisie;" and the Comtesse de St. Aulaire, wife of the General in command of the regiment quartered at P——, begged me to accompany her. Although belonging to the old set, she had to appear at most of the festivities given in the town. She was one of those lively women who make the best of everything. She hated Bonaparte, yet in military or diplomatic circles she never gave way to her feelings, appearing only indifferent.

"You must really come with me, Madame de Meilhan," she said: "you have been at the French Court; you have mixed here and in Paris with our best and oldest blood; and now you must get acquainted with what we call 'la haute bourgeoisie'"—forgetting that I once partly belonged to it. "You will see some charming women, and some very clever men. I think sometimes it is almost a pity that our set keep so much to themselves. It would do us no harm if we were now and then to break through the barrier, and to throw off a few of our prejudices. You see I have become very liberal in my ideas, and I believe your own coincide entirely with mine."

My husband having no objection, but promising to accompany me, I consented, and on the following evening I was presented in due form to M. le Préfet and his wife. M. Béra was a handsome agreeable man, and Madame Béra was famed for her great beauty;

her manners were unexceptionable, and her conversation very interesting. The salons of the Préfecture were crowded with most richly-dressed women, and the jewels were in such profusion, that it was quite dazzling. The Préfet opened the ball with the Comtesse de St. Aulaire, the General with Madame Béra, and the "Procureur-Général" was given to me;—M. de Meilhan having his wife for partner.—He was the plainest man I ever saw, but one of the most accomplished of my acquaintances. I conversed long with him; his language was perfect prose poetry, and what might have been dry from another was full of freshness and interest when spoken of by him. I danced twice with him, once with the Préfet, then with General de St. Aulaire; the Président and the Avocat-Général being my two last partners. The supper announced, we adjourned to the gallery, where it was served, and where every delicacy was spread. I remarked that there was much good breeding, but more affectation of manners than among the nobility.

I was rather glad to have been at this ball, for it is well to be acquainted with the different classes of society. I found that these young girls were as modest and retired as the titled ones; no coquetry nor forwardness were displayed, and they were all very simply dressed; married women alone enjoyed the privilege of showing themselves in all their magnificence.

There was a trial coming on, which promised to

be very interesting. The Procureur-Général had strongly advised me to be present, and two seats were reserved for Madame de St. Aulaire and myself in the tribune of the ladies of the Parquet (wives of the high functionaries). The trial was to begin the day after the ball. We went early, so as to be there before the Court arrived. Soon the Président entered, then the Procureur-Général, the Avocats-Généraux, and the Substitut of the Procureur; dressed in scarlet robes with large ermine capes, they looked quite regal. They took their places on an estrade; then the barristers, attorneys, etc., followed, and sat on benches below. The defendant, witnesses, and jurors were already seated. The galleries and the hall behind the witnesses were crowded with people.

The crime which had been committed was this: M. Fleury, a rich, retired banker, with his wife, inhabited a very handsome house in the town, and a niece of Madame Fleury, whom they had adopted, was living with them. The young girl was betrothed to a nephew of M. Fleury; he was a poor, but very promising young barrister; he also lived with his relations, from whom both young people expected everything, neither of them having money.

The household was composed of three male and three female servants. It was said that the banker and his wife were excellent people, who treated their dependants in the kindest manner. One evening, during supper, M. Fleury, who had a strong tinge of Royalism about him, was talking rather dis-

respectfully of Bonaparte, and it happened that the footman, who was waiting at table, worshipped the Emperor. Mademoiselle Rouvière, who had been watching the man's face, saw now and then a dreadful scowl upon it; and when supper was over, and the things removed, she said to her uncle, —

"You have made an enemy of Jérôme, my good uncle; he looked daggers at you."

"I perceived it, my child, and I have no doubt that the kitchen will be entertained with my speech about the Corsican usurper."

Nothing more was said or thought on the subject; and about eleven, the party retired to rest. Between one and two o'clock Mademoiselle Rouvière heard groans in her uncle's room. She got up, and went towards it; the door was opened, but it was in darkness. Some one passed her hastily, and as she had no light, she could not see who it was. She felt that something had been thrown at her, and had fallen to the ground, with a noise such as a dagger or a knife would make. Heedless of it, she went forward, tumbling over a body stretched on the floor. She uttered a fearful scream, which brought young Fleury out of his room; he had a candle, and saw the most ghastly sight before his eyes. Half out of bed was poor Madame Fleury, bleeding from a wound in her head, and apparently dead; and on the floor M. Fleury, with a fearful gash on his face, and evidently wounded in the region of the heart, as his clothes were saturated with blood in that part. Mademoiselle

Rouvière was near him; her dressing-gown being also stained with blood. Almost paralysed by this sight, young Fleury lost all presence of mind, and stopped there petrified, whilst some of the servants, who had heard the disturbance, had come down, and at the sight of so frightful a spectacle, had run for a doctor and the gendarmes. They happened to live in the same street, and were soon on the spot. In the meantime young Fleury had carried Mademoiselle Rouvière to her room and returned, trying, but in vain, to bring the wounded people to life again, but all was useless; and when the doctor arrived, and had examined M. and Madame Fleury, he declared that life was extinct, —they had been foully murdered; and when the police made their appearance, they drew up the official report, taking M. Fleury and Mademoiselle Rouvière prisoners—that is to say, they were locked in their respective rooms, being accused of having perpetrated the crime. Her stained dressing-gown seemed to accuse her, and young Fleury had had to confess that the dagger belonged to him; though he did not know how it had been taken away from his room.

Mademoiselle Rouvière was first examined. She was a small slender young girl, with a very interesting face and modest look, which strongly prepossessed me in her favour; she seemed suffering, for her face was extremely pale, and now and then she held her pocket-handkerchief to her eyes to wipe the tears away. Her examination began thus: the President told her to raise her right hand, and she repeated after him—

"I swear to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth;" then the following questions were asked:—

"What is your name?"

"Catherine Herminie Rouvière," she replied in a trembling voice.

"Where were you born?"

"At Niort."

"What is your age?"

"Nineteen."

"Your occupation?"

"I have none."

"Are your parents alive?"

"No; both are dead."

"In what relationship stood the deceased to you?"

"I am their niece."

"What led you to commit the crime?"

"I deny the charge," she said, in a strong emphatic voice; "they were my benefactors."

And then she related what I have written above.

"Then you accuse the footman of the deed?"

"I accuse no one: I could not see who passed me, but naturally my suspicions fell upon him."

"Do you know this dagger?"

"No; I never saw it."

"But it belongs to young Fleury?"

"I never went into M. Fleury's room, and did not know he possessed a dagger."

"Was there ever any unpleasantness between your relations and yourself?"

"Never."

"Had they given their consent to your marriage?"

"Most decidedly."

"Were you pleased with the match?"

"Perfectly so."

"You may step down."

M. Fleury was then called; the same oath was administered to him, and the same questions about his name, age, etc., etc.; and then the President said to him,—

"How did you come to hear the scream of Mademoiselle Rouvière?"

"I was dreaming that some one had entered my room and wanted to murder me; I awoke suddenly, and listening attentively, I heard a scream followed by a fall. I jumped out of bed, and went straight to my uncle's room, from whence I felt sure the noise had come, and there I saw the ghastly spectacle. So horrified was I, that I remained paralysed with terror. I went to my aunt, and laid her head on the pillow, then turned to my uncle. Mademoiselle Rouvière was stretched across the body, so I took her up in my arms, carried her to her room, and returned to the murdered ones. I scarcely had been there two minutes, before the gendarmes and the doctor came in. They almost immediatly seized me and locked me up in my room. The same thing was done to Mademoiselle Rouvière; since then until to-day I have not seen her."

"Have you nothing more to say?" said the President.

"Nothing more."

"Do you suspect any one?"

"I do; but I prefer saying nothing more on the subject."

The footman was then brought forward. He had a cunning face, and looked as if he belonged to the south of France. The oath was administered also to him.

"What is your name?"

"Jérôme Breton."

"What is your age?"

"Twenty-five."

"Where were you born?"

"I do not know."

"Remember you swore to tell the truth," said the Procureur-Général.

"And so I will, M. le Procureur. But I lost my parents when I was very young, and never heard where I was born."

"You know, at all events, where you lived, then?"

"At Nîsmes."

"With whom?"

"With my mother's brother: I went there to learn the trade of shoemaker, but did not like it, and I found a place as errand-boy with an attorney; then I took a place as footman; before I came here I had two places."

"You said you lost your parents when young: where were they when they died, since you said you lived with an uncle?"

"I don't know; my uncle came to fetch me."

"If you were so young, how could you learn a trade?"

"Of course I did not till I was older."

"Why did you leave your places?"

"Because I liked change."

"Had you any certificate with you when you came to M. Fleury?"

"I had one from my last place."

"And M. Fleury took you without any other references?"

"He did."

"Where were you on the night of the murder?"

"In bed."

"Did you not hear any noise?"

"None. I sleep very soundly."

"Do you know this dagger?"

"I do: I saw it many a time, in M. Fleury's room."

"Do you think Mademoiselle Rouvière would have committed the murder?"

"I do not know. I fancy she wished to be married at once, and her aunt was rather against it."

"How did you know?"

"I heard Madame Fleury saying one day, 'Herminie,' you should wait till you are twenty,' and the young lady answered, she would prefer marrying at once."

Mademoiselle Rouvière was recalled.

"Did you wish to be married at once?"

"I did not. My aunt was simply joking with me; saying she was so selfish, that she could not bear, even

for a day, to have me out of her sight; that she was quite jealous of her nephew. My reply was, that we were to live with her always, she would never know any difference. Not a word more was spoken about my marriage."

Jérôme was then recalled.

"You see you are mistaken."

"I did not affirm I was right, but I thought so."

"Have you ever felt any animosity against Mademoiselle Rouvière, or young Fleury?"

"None."

"Any against M. and Madame Fleury?"

"No, sir."

"You may sit down for the present."

The coachman and groom were examined, but could say nothing to elucidate the case. They slept in the stables, and had only been apprised of the murder when the gendarmes and the doctor had been there. Dr. Desplaces was examined as to the nature of the wounds, etc.; this I shall pass over, as well as the examination of the cook and lady's-maid, as they were of no interest. The housemaid was the most important witness. After the preliminary questions, she answered the following:—

"How long have you been in the service of M. and Madame Fleury?"

"Since their marriage—now thirty years."

"Can you tell us anything which may give us a clue as to who is the murderer?"

"I can, so far as appearances go."

"Do you know where Jérôme Breton was when the murder took place?"

"That I could not say. When the cook and I, who slept in the same room, heard the screams, we got up and met the lady's-maid coming out of hers; we three came downstairs together, I leading the way. We looked into the master's room, and when we saw the terrible sight, we were so upset that we rushed out of the house to call for help. Antoinette, Madame Fleury's maid, remained at the bedroom door, and saw M. Fleury carrying Mademoiselle Rouvière to her room, and then she went to her. As soon as the doctor had examined the bodies she called him in to Mademoiselle, who was insensible. Jérôme did not appear on the scene; but as he slept quite at the top of the house, he might not have heard the noise; however, I had my suspicions about him, though I did not give utterance to them."

"Did he say anything about his master that night?"

"I was clearing away the supper-things with him, and he looked very fierce; but he was a bad-tempered man at all times, and I took no notice. When he came to supper, he still seemed cross, and when he was summoned to the drawing-room, he swore and muttered something to himself, which I could not make out. When he returned, he had a dreadful scowl on his face, and ate very little supper. Then all at once, without any one knowing why, he abused all the Royalists, and swore at them, so that at last, as we had finished, we left him alone in the kitchen."

"Did he ever speak of his parents or his native place before you?"

"Never; but I saw once the address of a letter of his; it was to Francesca Bertoni, Bastia, Corsè."

"Do you know where those places are?"

"I have not the remotest idea."

"Are you sure the name was Bertoni?"

"Perfectly certain."

"Now tell us what happened after the gendarmes had locked up Mademoiselle Rouvière and her betrothed."

"We went downstairs. It was then quite daylight. The cook and I, with the coachman and groom, sat talking about the dreadful affair; then the cook gave us some breakfast, and made some chocolate for the people upstairs. I took it up, and came down again. The gendarmes and Antoinette took theirs; but M. Fleury and Mademoiselle Rouvière refused to take anything. We continued talking in the kitchen till Jérôme made his appearance. He had on his livery, which struck me as very strange, because he never wore it the first thing in the morning. We told him of what had happened; he looked much surprised, and said he must go at once and tell M. Lacaze,—a great friend of poor M. Fleury—and, as soon as he had eaten his breakfast, he went away."

"Did you not make any remarks to him about his clothes?"

"I thought I had better not. But as soon as he was safely out of the house, I went to his room; it

was locked, which aroused my suspicions. However, there were duplicate keys for every room, press, and cupboard in the place—it was an odd habit of my poor master to have them—and I had the key of the drawer where they were kept, so I took the one labelled 'footman's room,' and opened the door. The bed had been tossed about, and I saw on it the jacket he wore to do his work in, in the morning. One tolerably large piece had been torn, and was holding by one of the buttons; two other buttons were off; they had apparently been pulled with great violence; in some places the jacket was wet."

"Was there any indication of blood in the water in which it had been washed?"

"The basin and jug were empty, and the water must have been thrown out of the window, which looked into the garden. I had filled the jug the previous night, so I am sure he had used it."

"What did you do then?"

"I left the things as I had found them, locked the door, and went to tell the gendarmes what I had seen. They sat in a room, in the same passage where the rooms of the prisoners and murdered ones were, and we three went to my master's room; we looked about for the missing buttons, and, sure enough, one was in the bed, and the other was found at some distance off it. They belonged, I knew well, to Jérôme's jacket."

"When he returned, did you say anything to him?"

"I was afraid he would suspect me of having by some means entered his room. The gendarmes locked

the street door, and watched him narrowly afterwards."

"Did not the other servants make remarks about his wearing his livery?"

"As he had been out, no attention was paid to it afterwards."

"Did he let you into his room that day?"

"Yes, sir. I said to him, 'Now, Jérôme, I am going to do your room,' and he answered, 'Wait a moment, please; I have not washed myself yet; when I have done, you can come.' Half an hour afterwards he came down and said,—'You may go now, Lizette.'"

"How did you find his room then?"

"The jacket had disappeared. I looked in the cupboard; it was not there; I felt almost sure he had done away with it."

"You said there was no water in his room when you went in: how did he manage to wash himself?"

"I generally left some in the next room, in case it should be wanted, and I found that the pail had been touched. When I came down, the cook said that Jérôme had gone into the garden and had not yet come back; she wondered what he was about. I said nothing, and as the street-door bell rang, I went to open it, one of the gendarmes following me to unlock it. Several gentlemen entered, and there was some writing done; then all the doors and cupboards were sealed up. They were told what I had discovered about Jérôme; and just as he was re-entering the house, he was taken into custody."

"Did you go into the garden afterwards?"

"Immediately, and looked about, fancying I might discover something, but in vain. We have a very cunning little dog, so I went to fetch him, and brought him back with me. I looked again in every nook and corner, and at last I saw a place where the soil seemed to have been turned up recently. I said to the little dog, 'Come, Médor, take up Jérôme's jacket.' The little thing looked at me and wagged his tail, but did nothing. 'Come, Médor,' I said again, 'scratch it,'—showing the spot—'take it out and bring it to me.' He immediately set to work, sending the soil and things flying about. I took a large stick and helped him, and very soon I perceived what I was searching for; the jacket was there."

"Did you take it away with you?"

"I called one of the gendarmes, and gave it to him."

A few other witnesses were called, and then Jérôme. He denied everything until the jacket was shown to him. Then his eyes flashed like those of a tiger, and his face became livid with rage, or perhaps remorse; but he continued to deny the charge.

Then came the defence of the accused. Mademoiselle Rouvière's counsel was the first, and ably did he defend his client. Young Fleury defended himself, and I think he won all hearts by the simplicity and candour of his words, as well as by the heartfelt way he expressed them, as they flowed from his tremulous lips; it was very touching.

"Jérôme's counsel did as well as any man can, when he is aware he has a bad cause to defend, and has a conscience to boot. The first Avocat-Général afterwards spoke, and was very eloquent, but was surpassed by the Procureur-Général, whose delivery was magnificent. It reminded me almost of the Dominican.

Sentence was passed on Jérôme, who was found guilty, with extenuating circumstances — at which every one felt astonished—and condemned to the galleys for life.

Immediately all the ladies who were acquainted with Mademoiselle Rouvière went to her, and much sympathy was shown to the betrothed. The next day I heard that young Fleury on returning to the house had broken a blood-vessel, and that, fearing death, he wished to marry Mademoiselle Rouvière at once; the sad ceremony was not delayed an instant.

Before leaving them, I will state that he recovered, and subsequently had the house in which the murders had been perpetrated pulled down, and re-built so differently that it could not be recognised.

I was very much pleased with the ladies of the 'Parquet,' who overwhelmed me with politeness; and before leaving P—— I called on the three principal ones.

Our next visit was to be at the Château de Villours, inhabited by the Princesse de Marsillac. There was to be there a "retour de noces" for M. and Madame

de Monbel, and as it was nearing vintage-time, we were to stay for it, and then return to Paris.

The Princesse was a widow, and lived with her son and her daughter, Jacqueline de Hauteville, a heroine, who had fought at the side of her lover, who was killed in the defence of his country. Of her I shall speak further. Besides the St. Anges and ourselves, there were to be at the Château the Vicomte d'Entremont; the Baronne Stéphanie de Kérouare, Chanoinesse de Rémirémont; Mesdemoiselles Diane and Julie de Préville, Messieurs de Blossac et de Beaumanoir, and Madame la Vicomtesse de Chaverny, a very pretty young widow, who afterwards married the Vicomte d'Entremont.

On our way to Villours we were to stop midway at the small town of B——, to go to the wedding of Madame de Monbel's foster-sister. The family lived about a mile from B——, and we arrived the night before the affair was to take place, putting up at a pleasant little inn, facing the "mail," or public promenade. After taking some refreshments, we drove to the farm, in order to present the gifts of the De St. Anges and De Monbels to the bride-elect. We alighted from our carriages, and went up a steep ascent leading to the house; the latter being hewn into the rocks, which constitute the great features of that part of the country.

The path became wider, and we soon perceived a little urchin—who had been set to watch—running, as fast as his legs could carry him, to announce our

arrival. We discerned a sort of triumphal arch which had been erected in honour of M. and Madame de Monbel, and soon the Normans came towards us. Laure's nurse, a most comely woman, followed by her sons and daughters, approached. Laure ran to her, and was folded in her embrace, as if she had been a little child. The foster-sister did the same, and between the two peasant women the young patrician came back to us; and after M. and Madame de St. Ange had greeted them, Laure said to me,—

"Here is my dear 'mère nourrice,' Mathilde, and my pretty sister Eulalie: are they not nice?"

"Quite worthy of your love, I am sure," I replied; and I told them both that I was very glad to become acquainted with them.

The foster-father, his sons and other daughters, seemed very shy, but we talked to them, and they were soon at their ease. We entered a large vaulted room with a very rough floor, but the whole appearance of it showed they were well-to-do people. By the large fireplace sat two very old people—the grandfather and grandmother—looking as if they were very well taken care of. The presents were unpacked, and much joy was evinced at each gift, as it came out of the box. After a while, the bridegroom came in; he was a tall, handsome young fellow, and it struck me at once, as an extraordinary thing, that he had escaped going into the army; I asked him how it was.

"Fortunately, madame," he said, "I broke my right arm some time before the conscription took

place, and so I was exempted. Oh, what a terrible scourge those wars have been and will be to France! Look at our fields below—and he extended his arm towards them: women and children alone were the reapers of the harvests; and there will scarcely be one vigorous man left to make the wine this year. Nearly all the men of this part are gone, and perhaps for ever. Many of them, stout and brave hearts, lie on the battlefield, their bones mouldering far away from home. But they are resting from their labours as well as from their pains; everything must go to rest at last."

He continued for some time talking in the same strain, and then we went to see Eulalie's house, which was separated from her mother's by a large garden and a narrow path lined on one side by the rocks, hewn all the way along, for the use of the family, their goods, and their cattle.

"See, messieurs and mesdames," said the young girl, as she tripped along, in a mirthful voice, "all these are mine"—and she pointed to her goats, poultry, pigs, and donkeys: "they were all given to me as wedding presents." And when we entered the room which was to serve her for kitchen and parlour, she opened her presses full of linen and clothes. "All that linen we spun during the winter evenings, and what beautiful tales we were told then! All the neighbours came to help us; it was so pleasant."

On one shelf I remarked there were several silver goblets. The French peasants think a great deal of

having silver and linen, and it is rare not to see it, even among those who are not well off.

As we had sent away the carriages, we walked back to B——, accompanied for awhile by our friends, and we promised, on leaving them, to be punctual in meeting them at the "Mairie," for the civil marriage. In high life, that ceremony used to be generally performed at home, the evening before the Church marriage. It had been the case with Laure, after the marriage settlement, to which the nearest relations were all invited, and signed the contract. By religious people the civil marriage is not considered binding until the Church has consecrated it.

I was glad in the morning to see, on getting up, that the weather was a little cloudy, as we were to walk with the wedding party to the farm; and in the midday searching sun, it would have been anything but pleasant. To do honour to the Normans, we had dressed very gaily. We drove to the "Mairie," where we found about twenty people. The bride looked extremely pretty in her very light and fine blue cloth dress, bound at the bottom with black velvet. On her shoulders she had a very handsome embroidered handkerchief, trimmed with lace. Her cap also had beautiful valenciennes. Round her neck she wore a black velvet, with a large gold heart and cross, and a bouquet of orange flowers pinned on her left side; a tiny wreath of the same crowned her cap. The mother wore handsome things. All the other women were also gaily attired; the sight was quite dazzling to the eyes, there

were so many scarlet aprons and handkerchiefs and even dresses of "beau rouge"—a cotton stuff much worn by peasant women.

Leading to the altar the women who have been in in his service, or the farmers' daughters, is a mark of great esteem for a gentleman to show to any of his dependants, and M. de St. Ange was quite willing to do it for Eulalie, whose mother had not only nursed Laure, but had during the revolution been a very great help to the family. The Marquis led the procession, with the bride, at the head of which the "ménétrier" walked, playing his most lively tunes. M. de Monbel gave his arm to "la mère Norman," Madame de St. Ange had "le père Norman," Laure the bridegroom. I walked with the Mayor, who from respect for the family had accepted the invitation; he was one of the notabilities of the town. My husband had the bride's aunt, and Paul, as best man, led the pretty Françoise, Eulalie's sister; the rest came after us as they liked. We had to cross the *grand rue*, and it was quite amusing to see the crowds of people looking at us in the streets and from their windows. Immediately on our return, refreshments were served, then dancing began in the large yard opposite the barn, where the gala dinner was to be given. This repast was rather a tiresome affair for us, whose appetites were not to be compared with that of our friends; however, as we had a table to ourselves, with the bridal pair only, we soon left the barn and went to sit in the garden,

from which there was rather a pretty view of a vale, with lofty poplars and thick hedges, in the midst of which glided a rivulet, whose silvery water looked like a ribbon from afar, as it flowed peacefully on its pebbled bed. At our backs rose the rocks, covered with vineyards. How quiet and placid all these were, and how often since, in my dark days, have I wished I had gone there to live, far from the world, and die among those kind-hearted unsophisticated people! In the cool of the evening we mixed in the strange dances of the peasants, such as "la bourrée, la trompeuse, le branle, la Boulangère," and others whose names I have forgotten. One of the dances was very profitable for the young couple. The lady held money in her hand, and in hopping about with her partner had to try and prevent him catching it; but at last, from fatigue, was obliged to yield, and the coin was put into a bag for the newly-married ones.

At about nine o'clock another feast was prepared, during which songs *ad infinitum* were sung. Before separating, Paul led the bridesmaid, (who carried a dish full of sweetmeats,) to every guest, presenting the dish and singing all the time a bridal song. In return for every bonbon taken, a piece of money was dropped into the dish. I think, with the dance and this, the sum amounted to three hundred francs. At eleven our carriages arrived, and we bade farewell to the merry party, who were to continue dancing and amusing themselves until daybreak. The custom is to take to the young couple "une rôtie,"

soup made with wine, toast, and sugar, at two o'clock a.m., a custom more amusing to the assistants, I should fancy, than to the parties who have to eat it in bed.

In the middle of the next day we were starting for our journey, and we arrived at the castle as the shades of night were dropping their dark mantle over the earth; but just as we were nearing the grand old structure, which had sustained a siege, and shewed signs of the insane wickedness of the republican mob, the trembling starlight cleared away the motionless shadows, and the young moon rose up from her azure bed, sliding along and causing fitful shadowy phantoms to appear on the old walls, whilst a soft wind moaned among the trees lining the road. There was a deep moat in front of the castle, over which was thrown a drawbridge. The great bell was rung, the huge gates were soon thrown open, and the carriages rolled heavily into the outer courtyard. There we alighted, and were conducted, by the major-domo, to the second yard, separated from the first by grated gates. One might have thought oneself in feudal times. The building formed a square, and at the great entrance-door, the Princesse, her son and daughter, and the Vicomte d'Entremont, received us. How stately the mother looked, and yet how graciously she welcomed us! Her hair was as white as the driven snow, her brow slightly furrowed, perhaps more with sorrow than age; her features were remarkably handsome, and in the light hazel

eyes there was still much fire. She gave me the idea of being a strong-minded woman, who had suffered heroically all the ills and sorrows of her life.

Mademoiselle Jacqueline de Hauteville struck me much more than even her mother. She was about five or six-and-thirty, rather tall, and with a most elegant and graceful figure. Her face was very pale, or perhaps I should say marble-like, for it did not look like the whiteness of deficient health. Her large almond-shaped grey eyes spoke volumes of love, kindness, and at the same time of unutterable sorrow. The forehead was as pure and as smooth as that of a statue; her hair dark chestnut colour, with a golden tinge, remarkably brilliant by daylight; the mouth and nose were not faultless,—they did not however call forth criticism. She wore a black dress; a white handkerchief was thrown across her shoulders and tied in front with a large knot, leaving part of the snowy throat visible; round her neck was a black velvet ribbon, from which hung a portrait set with diamonds; a few splendid rings shone on her taper fingers. She reminded me much of some of Marie Antoinette's pictures; she certainly would have graced a throne as well as the luckless Austrian Princess.

In an immense room, hung all round with family portraits, was served a supper, to which we were very ready to do honour. La Baronne Stéphanie de Kèrouare was seated in the room when we entered: she was small, dark, and entirely devoid of beauty, but

could boast of a charming and aristocratic manner, and was thoroughly amiable and witty; her chanoinesse dress, consisting of a grey silk and white muslin handkerchief, became her well; on her head was a sort of veil, attached to the top by a kind of pin, called a "husband." Black and grey are the only colours allowed to them.

The Prince was the image of his mother. The Vicomte was not at all good-looking, but pleasant and witty, and above all excessively well-bred. After supper, being rather fatigued, we all retired. The room my husband and I occupied was immensely large; the walls were covered with tapestry hangings, and the four-post bedstead was of oak, carved with the most fantastical figures. "I hope," I said to Célestine, "that this room is not haunted?"

"Oh no, Madame,—the Marsillacs and De Hautevilles were all good people; I asked downstairs whether there were any ghosts, and that was the answer I received; so Madame may sleep in perfect security."

I was glad of it, for I really did not particularly wish to have another interview with spirits from the other world; I liked to hear them talked of, but preferred not seeing them, unless I had been with a party.

The next day the other guests arrived. The Mesdemoiselles de Préville were amazingly plain—not very young, but amiable; the gentlemen were more remarkable for their "bon ton," obligingness, and clever-

ness, than for their looks. Madame de Chaverny was a blonde, pretty, graceful, and lively; somewhat bad-tempered at times; rather a flirt, but upon the whole more agreeable than otherwise. She flirted desperately with M. d'Entremont, who constituted himself her humble slave. She was rich, he was poor, and I suppose he thought it a good speculation. I think, however, they liked one another very well, since it ended by their marrying, and so far as she was concerned, she gained nothing by taking him for her husband.

Villours was very much like a fortress. On one side the rocks defended it from an attack; they ran along for more than a mile and a half; and on the other side a narrow, but deep river, flowed at the foot of a high wall, which would have been difficult to scale; the moat was the safety of the front, which was flanked by two large towers. The grounds inside were not extensive—rather wild in some parts; much care did not seem to be bestowed upon them, except on the orangery, half a quarter of a mile long, cut into the rock, and with twelve large windows opening on a terrace of the same length as the orangerie. There were lovely plants from foreign climes, in company with beautiful orange and lemon trees. By a flight of steps was reached an avenue of lime-trees, arching overhead; the rest of the grounds were overrun with plants growing as they liked, and in front of the house was a broad lawn, pleasant to look at, since, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, it was

studded with little geranium beds. The apartments were large, numerous, and tolerably furnished; many of the pieces of furniture were extremely rich and antique—those had escaped the revolutionary pillage; the others were inferior, and of recent date; but notwithstanding this mixture of grandeur and decay, one felt that it was grand, and that great souls lived there. Our life was pretty much the same as at the Marquise de St. Ange's, except that the gentlemen went out more often than in town. We had drives, pretty walks, and now and then callers.

Two days after our arrival, there was a large dinner-party, followed by a ball; people came to it from miles. Both went off splendidly. The next day I did not feel very well, and was obliged to refuse an invitation to the Baronne de Boissay's. Jacqueline and I stayed quietly at home. I was glad to have a little time alone with her. I loved her, for there was in her something so indescribably sweet, so melancholy, that I seldom could take my eyes off her. Towards the evening she said to me,—

"Will you come to the tower, from whence you will see the tract of country which some years ago was overrun by our foes?"

"Most willingly," I said, for I was in hopes she would talk of her life,—a subject which I had not yet dared to broach; "the view must be pretty."

"No," she said with a sigh, "there is little to please the eye; but I will tell you about the fight, and being on the spot the interest will be greater."

I followed her up the winding narrow stone stair; she took a key out of her pocket, and unlocked a door leading into a small room, fitted up more like an oratory than anything else.

"He died here," she said in a low, sweet, tremulous voice—"died in my arms. O Lord, my God, how long shall my poor heart yearn for the boundless joy of meeting my beloved one again! I have lifted up my hands in supplicating prayer, but it has been unheard. Oh! how I long to cast aside the clay that chains me to earth, when I shall climb up the broad path leading to Thy countless worlds, and meet him in one of those celestial abodes, where I hope to sit with him in the sunshine of Thy love." She seemed to have forgotten she was not alone; soon, however, she turned to me, saying,—"Madame de Meilhan, may you never suffer what I have suffered!"

Then she opened another door, and we stepped out on the battlements. As Mademoiselle de Hauteville had said, there was not much to attract the eye, though the country was pretty well undulated and hilly nearer to the castle. Then in the distance appeared fields, meadows, and woods, behind which rose here and there steeples, castle-towers, and small villages, with their motley groups of cottages. And far, far away, the broad Atlantic lay across the horizon, like a line of glimmering silvery clouds.

Jacqueline advanced towards the edge of the battlement and said,—

"There he stood, Madame de Meilhan. Do you see

this cross, and these initials?" pointing to them with her finger. "I carved them that I might not forget—as if I could ever forget," she murmured to herself, "the exact spot where the murderous bullets struck him;" then she continued, lifting up her right hand towards heaven,—"You see that star beyond that feathery cloud?—I fancy he is there. It is a belief, or rather a superstition, of our parts, that each soul that departs at this time of the evening takes its flight to the first star that appears; and when my own Guillaume's last gasp told me that his soul had fled from the body, I looked towards heaven, and this same bright little star shone before my eyes. Ah! yes," she continued, "whether superstition or not, I care not; it is so consoling to me to think he looks down upon me and sees how faithful I am to him. I often sit here hour after hour, forgetting that there is a world around me. I live not in it, Madame de Meilhan; my life is but a dream, which I trust will soon have no awakening."

"I would not have spoken to you on so sad a subject, but since you have volunteered it, will you tell me all that happened?"

"Most willingly to you, for I truly believe you feel acutely, and would feel as I do. I am glad you wish to hear it; I like to speak of him who possessed my whole heart and soul. Oh yes, though lying cold in his tomb, he is still alive to me. You must see his grave; I will take you to see it. I often go there and sit; I am happy when I speak to him. Every breath of

wind seems to my listening ear a musical whisper of my adored one, and often I awake the castle echo, which repeats the name of my beloved Guillaume."

For a few moments she ceased talking, her lovely eyes being turned upwards, towards the blue firmament, then bringing out of the room two chairs, for us to sit down, she began thus :—

"I was just about eighteen when the terrible Revolution, which shed the blood of our beloved King and Queen and that of the flower of our land, was at its height. All our relations, friends, and neighbours who had hitherto escaped the guillotine, were taking means of freeing the land from the tyrants who governed our unhappy country, and bands were being organized to that effect. This place had been the rendezvous of those who longed to join that of M. de Lescure, and on the eve of their starting I was to be married to Guillaume de Lansac; his coming had been delayed by the difficulties he had encountered, also the fear of being seized by the republicans; and as we had little hope of ever meeting again in this world—when once gone from here—we both wished to be united again before death severed us. In the morning of the eventful day he arrived, almost dead with fatigue, but as happy as I was at the thought of becoming one another's. However, God had ordered that it should be otherwise. A servant of one of the gentlemen who were here betrayed us; he left the castle unperceived, and joined the republican band, who, ignorant of our movements, were taking another road to oppose that

of M. de Lescure's. Vainly did we wait hour after hour for the Abbé Dufaure; he never came, and to this day we never heard what became of him. Guillaume and I were breaking our hearts with despair, but we were not allowed any time to indulge in our sorrow. As night drew near, the clinking of arms was heard from afar, wafted to us by the misty wind. The sentries posted here saw the miscreants nearing the road leading to this place; the alarm was sounded; we assembled in the yard to arrange our forces. We were about 300 in all. The attack had been unexpected; however, every man was soon at his post. I followed Monsieur De Lansac up here, carrying his ammunition; my mother was with my father on the other tower. The night, which had been dark and gloomy, was luckily soon lighted up by the moon, and we could easily distinguish our assailants. The assault was a difficult task to them, as we poured volley after volley over them. The river prevented them scaling the walls, and their shots from there were murderously returned. They had no chance, yet persevered; uttering the most ferocious yells that ever our ears were struck with. Long was the fight; bullets whizzed over my head, one grazed my face, and another passed through my left arm, but I did not wince. M. de Lansac was not even aware of it; I stood a little behind him, loading his guns; now and then I felt a little faint, and the blood flowed freely from the wound, trickling all over me. I was engaged in loading for my precious Guillaume another gun, when he fell backward, shot

through the heart. I threw away from me the weapon, and knelt by him, raising his head in my arms; his eyes were nearly closed, but with a sudden effort he opened them, looked at me with an indescribable look of love, and whispered in an almost inaudible voice these words: 'My Jacqueline!' I pressed him to my heart; I called him by the tenderest words that had ever passed my lips; I raised my voice to God in the most earnest prayers, but in vain; all was over; his soul had departed for that unknown land, from whence no traveller returns. Oh, Mighty One!" she then exclaimed, raising her tearful eyes to the mocking moon, which looked in all its brightness upon the graceful form of Mademoiselle de Hauteville—is this weary soul of mine never to be at rest, with my own adored one? Oh that a voice could fall on my ear, and say to me, 'Come, come, it is time for thee to rejoin thy loved one.'" She remained in silence for a few minutes, then resumed her narrative. "The whistling of the shots had then ceased, the besiegers had been obliged to retire, and several of the gentlemen crowded around us.

"Send for a mattress," I said to one of them, in a faint voice; "I wish M. de Lansac to be carried into the little room."

"'You are wounded,' said M. de Semblancey to me; 'you are covered with blood.'

"'Yes,' I replied; 'I wish my arm could be bandaged tightly, for the blood is still flowing.'

"My brother, who happened to be near, was told

of what had taken place; he dressed my wound, and by that time the mattress having been brought up, M. de Lansac was carried in, and placed on it, and I knelt by the side of it, forgetting all except my misery. My mother was also slightly wounded, but of our people four alone were killed, and about twenty more or less wounded. I was begged over and over again to come down, but I would not leave my precious one, and my old 'bonne' came to watch with me over the beloved dead."

"Was there another attack after that?"

"No; as it had been settled, they all set forth; however, on the same night, instead of the next. There is under the castle a subterranean passage extending for two miles. It had at several epochs been quarried, but no one except ourselves knew of its being accessible to us. So they departed, and my mother, I, and the dead, with a few of the wounded and the servants, were left. There was no one to bury the dead, except some of the men-servants, who volunteered to perform that sad office. I, my own self, and with my own hands, laid my adored Guillaume in his coffin,—such as it was,—and followed him and the others to their last resting-place, accompanied by my dear mother and our people. On returning from our painful duty, we were confronted by half a dozen 'bonnets rouges!'

"'Here they are at last,' said one of them: 'allons, citoyennes, au nom de la république, une et indivisible; nous vous arrêtons.'

"'Allow us, at least,' said my mother, drawing herself up in her own majestic way, 'to return home for a few moments; my daughter and myself will be ready to follow you after we have taken some refreshment; for we are faint and weary.'

"'Very well, citoyenne,' answered the leader, with an oath, 'and you shall give us some of your best wine, so that we may drink to the republic for ever.'

"We were insulted the whole way; but one of the men—a youth—seemed much less horrible than the others, and to him I owed my deliverance. My own dear mother was conducted to Paris, where, after a month, she met with my noble father, who was led to the guillotine before her eyes. She saw his head fall, and, fainting away from the shock, she was taken back to the Conciergerie, where she remained in a swoon for nearly two whole days. Robespierre received the punishment of his crimes just a few days after, and my mother, with several others, were set free."

"And what became of you?"

"I had once done a kindness to the young man's mother, and he knew me, though I did not know him; I suppose there was a remnant of good feeling in him, for, as he was to take me to the town prison—they would not allow me to follow my mother—he took me to his mother's, who lived only a few miles from here, and there I was hidden for several months and most kindly treated, although the woman was poor. I had nothing with me, not even a trinket to be sold;

but after I had been in the cottage a fortnight, the young man returned, and offered to go to Villours in the dead of night, and see whether he could get me clothes and money. He was successful: by a miracle little harm had been done to the place; the servants were still there, and thus I was able to live, ignored and hidden, without any hardship, except the utter misery and desolation of my broken heart!"

"How long did you remain thus?"

"Three months, which might have been three centuries. Little by little the old woman and myself weaned away the young man from his evil course, and soon I was able to make him go in search of my brother. Oh! those long, tedious hours of expectation, and my not daring to leave the cottage for fear of being taken, for there were always suspecting people about, lurking here, there, and everywhere. I was at last able to hear from my brother; he had been severely wounded, but had recovered, and still continued with M. de Lescure. My brother's betrothed had been killed before his own eyes, and thus both of us were left to sorrow over those we had so much loved, and the indescribable misery of not knowing what had become of our parents. One night we were suddenly roused in the cottage, and my poor brother, in tatters and almost unrecognizable, stood before us, accompanied by Jéhan, my deliverer; he had been again wounded, and was disabled for further service. I thought it best then to return to Villours, anyhow. We felt sure of the servants. We managed one night

to return there; Jéhan was to keep watch for us. We were received with joy by our own people; and although now and then requisitions were made, we were never discovered—the servants contrived so well to pretend they were the hottest republicans. A year elapsed, and my dear mother returned, looking but the shadow of her former self. We were left in comparative peace, and, happily, better days dawned for our unhappy country. Of course you, Madame de Meilhan, were too young to remember the hapless misery of our beloved country?"

"In my memory it is very much like a twice-told tale. I remember hearing of terrible things passing in some parts of France, but it did not leave any very great impression on my mind; besides, the aunt with whom I lived was not an aristocrat, and our little place saw nothing of the horrors that desolated the country."

"You will easily imagine, Mathilde, how I had longed for the sight of the grave where my love was buried with him,—with him, the ever-adored one of my soul. But it was only by stealth that I was able to see it. When the planets and stars glimmered in the heavens, accompanied by my faithful nurse, I stole unperceived to where the cold dead lie. I am tiring you," she said, passing her hand caressingly over my shoulder; "let us go down, Mathilde; it is time we should do so."

One last look, one last silent prayer were given to the little star which shone like a diamond in the

midst of turquoises, and we descended to the room where our supper was laid, but for which neither of us cared.

On the morrow, my husband heard the news of the illness of his only surviving uncle, the Vicomte de Léoville-Meilhan, and was obliged to start and leave me behind. It was always a new sorrow for me to part with him, and I should have been childish enough to show it, had he not begged of me to refrain from doing so.

"Think of Jacqueline, dearest," he said to me, kissing me in his loving way; "what would you have done in her place?"

"I should have died."

"No, dearest one; people rarely die from sorrow."

"And yet, how many would, if the Almighty permitted it?"

"Perhaps so; but only think of the millions of women who do not, although they have been forsaken. Think, my little Mathilde, of all the love there is in the earth that those who are loved care not for; and yet people live on—live with their sorrowful, crushed hearts. The universe is a great sea of love; yet half of the men, who almost receive more adoration than women, hear not the harmonies which whisper for ever and ever, love—love for ever! Think yourself lucky, my darling, for there is concord in our souls, and you may proudly say, I am loved."

I felt the strength of his argument, and made up my mind to endure his departure bravely.

On that same evening, for the first time, the "Vendangeurs and Vendangeuses," who lived on the estate, were to be entertained at supper in the great courtyard. They were to dance on the lawn afterwards. The feast consisted of enormous tureens of "soupe aux choux," after which came geese boiled with cabbage, and some "vin du pays" to wash it down. They seemed to enjoy their meal, as well as the dance after it, at which I was much surprised, considering the fatigues of the day. The old village priest was one of the lookers-on, and now and then laughingly said,—

"C'est bien, mes enfants, amusez-vous: après le travail, la récréation; que le bon Dieu vous bénisse."

"Madame de Meilhan," Mademoiselle de Hauteville said the next morning, "will you come and see his grave?"

I assented, and we both started off. We went by the long avenue of lime-trees, arriving at a small door almost hidden under masses of ivy. She opened it, and we found ourselves in the open country; by a winding path, we soon reached the churchyard belonging to the Marsillacs. She took a key hanging on a nail, unfastened the door, and we entered God's own acre. The grave of M. de Lansac was soon discernible; it was so well taken care of. It was covered with beautiful geraniums and a few other plants; and above, orange-trees, with their virgin blossoms and golden apples, formed a sort of bower, under which we sat on a low bench. Jacqueline

first knelt down and seemed lost for a few minutes in deep and fervent prayer; she then raised her eyes to heaven, as if she saw there her well-beloved one. Afterwards she gathered a few flowers from the grave, mixed them with orange-flowers, and making up two bouquets, offered me one.

"Wear them for his sake," she said, with a mournful smile, "for I feel sure you would have liked one another."

I did as I was asked, and we remained silent for a long time; she seemed lost in thought, then she said,—

"Listen, I will call him;" and with her sweet melodious voice she repeated three times, "Guillaume, Guillaume, my own adored Guillaume!"

Half a second elapsed, whilst the sleeping echo was roused, and returned to us the mournful sound of "Guillaume, Guillaume, my own adored Guillaume," the last few words dying slowly away, as if with regret.

"Jacqueline," I called out, "Jacqueline, my own adored Jacqueline."

She put her hand to her heart as if to stop its beating, and as the sweet echo sent forth the name, two tears dropped silently from those beautiful grey orbs I loved to look at, and she said in a voice full of emotion,—

"It seems as it were reality; I fancy I hear his own dear voice calling after me, as he used to do in the days of our happiness. Oh, how long since I

heard that voice, which made my heart thrill with delight! Oh, why—why is it gone for ever?"

After sitting for about an hour, we left the inanimate dwellers of the tombs to their silent abodes. Before shutting the gate, Jacqueline turned her head once more back, saying,—

"À demain, my adored Guillaume, à demain."

Neither of us spoke as we returned home; I would not disturb Jacqueline's thoughts, and my own wandered far away where I knew my own Edouard was, thinking all the while of my happiness in having him to love and cherish.

The evening turned out very wet and chilly, and we sat round the huge fireplace, with its crackling logs of wood which sent forth their wholesome and pleasant perfumes of rosin. The bright flames alone lighted up the room, and stories were told by several of the company, to enliven the evening.

The Chanoinesse related several anecdotes about the Court of Stanislas, and also about Marie Leckzinska, his daughter, who had married Louis XV. The Comtesse Stéphanie had heard these stories from some of the old Chanoinesses who had visited the little Court of the ex-king of Poland.

There was a phenomenon relative to human kind at Nancy, which for a long time occupied King Stanislas. He had taken into his friendship a man remarkable for his diminutive size; it was "Bébé," who weighed one pound at his birth, and was put to bed in a wooden shoe. He was given to the king at

the age of five; he measured then nineteen inches, but was very pretty, and very well proportioned in his small figure. He would pass under an arm-chair like a spaniel, to hide himself and cause the king to ask for him; being very much pleased when he put everybody in alarm. Often he disappeared from the company, hiding himself under the ladies' dresses when they were seated; and when Bébé was called, each of them was afraid of crushing his little person. He was very cunning, affected pride on account of his small stature, and took pleasure in breaking Stanislas' glasses and porcelain. When backgammon was played, his impatience was extreme, on account of the noise the ladies made in shaking the dice-box, which wounded the delicacy of his organs; and if he did not wish to retire, they were obliged to leave off the game, for he was only quiet when put upon the table: he then entered the backgammon-board, put all the draughts into piles, sat upon them and allowed himself to fall, to amuse the company; however, this only when he was in good temper. The king gave him an hotel three feet high, where Bébé went to sulk. When the king would not execute his orders, or when he himself wished to resist those of the king, he shut himself up in his apartments, and when the king sent for him, he opened the window and said: "Dites au roi que je n'y suis pas." Then Stanislas had to promise a new suit of clothes, if he wished to be obeyed; they were all colours and shapes. Bébé had a dreadful temper,

and was very jealous—but jealous of objects proportioned to his smallness, especially of some of the ladies' dogs, believing that their caresses to those animals were prejudicial to those he expected for himself; he therefore threw several out of the window. It was impossible to give him any idea of God: he lived and died an atheist.

The Prince de Marsillac amused us very much with a little incident that happened, when he was young, to his sister.

"Jacqueline," he said, "took lessons from my tutor, the Abbé Renauld—a gentle, good man, but totally unfitted for teaching a child, as he was much too learned to stoop easily to the level of a girl of eight. I was then about fourteen, and generally wrote my exercises whilst my sister said her lessons. She was immensely fond of catching flies; she had seen me do so scores of times, and had become quite an adept at it. One day, in the midst of a very elaborate explanation on the rules of syntax—of which the poor child understood nothing—she stood near the Abbé with her hands behind her back, but all the time watching a fly on the table before her. The Abbé said to her,—

"'Now, mademoiselle, give me an example.'"

"'What a dreadful job God must have had in making flies!" she replied to the astounded teacher: I have been looking at this little thing for ever so long, and cannot make out how it was made.'

"I burst out laughing; the Abbé ordered me out of

the room, and Jacqueline, quite undismayed, listened to the reproof, promising to pay attention to what was explained to her. I was recalled, and peace being restored, my tutor recommenced his explanation in still higher flown language. All at once I saw Jacqueline gently drawing back her right arm, and with great dexterity catching another fly on the shiny bald head of Renauld; exclaiming, 'I have it at last!' That was really too much for me. I jumped off my chair in fits of laughter. The Abbé rose, and with the utmost politeness said to my sister,—

"'Mademoiselle, allow me to open the door for you, and to beg of you never to return here, for we cannot understand one another.'

Thérèse, my sister's maid, who always sat in the room whilst she had her lessons, followed her, and Jacqueline was confronted by my mother, who happened to pass at the moment. My poor little sister had to give an account of herself, which proved utterly unsatisfactory, and she was sent to bed.

"Yes," said Mademoiselle de Hauteville, "I remember the catastrophe full well, and I had nothing but bread and water for the rest of the day, and on the morrow had to apologize to the Abbé for my rudeness; he kindly forgave me, and gave me a lesson on the natural history of flies,—a lesson to which I paid the utmost attention, it being infinitely more amusing to me than grammar."

I looked at the beautiful woman sitting not far

from me, and wondered how those lovely sad eyes could ever have been lively, and how she could ever have been otherwise than what I saw her at that moment.

Ghost stories were also related, but I was glad that supper interrupted them, as I felt anything but brave now that M. de Meilhan was gone; and the conversation becoming general, and being made very animated by the witty repartees of the guests, I forgot all about spectres, and laid my head down on my pillow, thinking, until I fell asleep, of my own dear husband, whose absence I felt much.

The following day Jacqueline came to my room, and said,—

"We are going to have another visitor to-day: Mademoiselle de St. Aldegonde, my brother's ward, and sister to his late betrothed, is coming; she is only fifteen, and the sweetest little fairy imaginable. She is the very image of poor Stella, and I only wish there was not such a contrast in the respective ages of guardian and ward; though I feel sure she is extremely fond of him, and he of her. Do try, Mathilde, to find out whether I am mistaken! We do so long to see my brother married, for I am sure he is not happy; and men cannot mourn for ever, as we women can; and yet it is impossible to make him change his mind about marrying."

I promised to do my best to find out what Mademoiselle de St. Aldegonde thought of the Prince; and two days afterwards I was lucky enough to

succeed. I was busily engaged finishing painting a miniature of M. de Lansac, from a drawing which Mademoiselle de Hauteville had executed from memory, and which she told me was an exact likeness. She wore it always on the reverse side of that of her father. As the visitors were out, I asked Rachel to stay and keep me company, as we had already become great friends. After talking on various subjects, I said, looking at her,—

"How do you like Mademoiselle de Hauteville?"

"Oh, Madame de Meilhan, I think she is the sweetest woman that ever lived: do you not think so yourself?"

"Yes, and the Princesse is very charming too."

"Indeed she is, and so kind to me; and do you not think that my guardian is——she stammered, blushed, and stopped short."

"Equally charming?" I said, finishing what I was sure she intended to say. "What a pity he is so much older than you are, Rachel; it would have been so nice if you had married him."

"He old, Madame de Meilhan!" she replied, turning perfectly scarlet; "oh no! not too old! And—but,—oh, I did not mean that: I— I— —" and all at once a flood of tears ran down the fair cheeks of the dear little thing.

I put aside my painting, and drawing her to me, kissed her, saying, "Tell me, darling Rachel, do you love M. de Marsillac?"

Her sobs prevented her replying at once, but after

a few minutes, she said to me, hiding her head on my shoulder,—

"I do love him; love him most dearly, and will never marry another! But he does not care for me, he looks upon me in the light of a child; he has never forgotten my sister, and I am sure he will never marry."

"But if he proposed to you, would you accept him?"

"Does one like darkness better than sunshine—sorrow better than happiness? And do you ask me whether I would marry him if such an infinite blessing were to be mine? Do you not know—of course you do not—that all the filial love I felt for him has been transformed into strange feelings which I can scarcely account for? He is always present to my mind. I dream, dream, think of him from morning till night; of him and only him! He is all to me upon earth—father, mother, sister, brother, and oh, much more still; and to be his wife would be the acme of all the happiness that mortal woman could wish for in this world."

I raised her head, and dried her tears. She smiled: and how pretty she was! Her hair was of that beautiful bluish-black which one sees on the raven's wings; her eyes blue with the softest expression; her skin was remarkably white, and the rosy tinge upon it gave it a beautiful effect. The mouth was neither too large nor too small, but well shaped, and displayed in speaking a row of lovely pearly teeth; her little Grecian nose was perfection. She was small, slender, and gracefulness itself.

As soon as I saw Jacqueline, I told her what had been the result of my conversation with Rachel, and she said,—

"How glad I am! But now you must finish your work, and try to draw out my brother. I want you to go and see the ruins of the Château de Kerkouan, which was destroyed at the Revolution; it belonged to the St. Aldegondes. My brother will take you to-morrow, and then you will see what you can do: it would be such happiness to us if he married Rachel!"

Monsieur de Marsillac and I started the following morning for Kerkouan, and as we were standing on one of the half-ruined towers, looking on the desolate ground about us—"Here," he said, "I was wounded, and Mademoiselle de St. Aldegonde was killed by my side." He turned away from me for an instant, and then I said, "You mean Rachel's sister?"

"Yes; the sweet incomparable Stella!—and yet when I say incomparable, perhaps I am wrong, for often I think she lives again in Rachel."

"What a charming young girl she is, and what a loving wife she will make: why not marry her, Monsieur de Marsillac?"

"Marry her, Madame! Do you forget her age and mine? And although such marriages are constantly occurring, I would not propose to her; I should be afraid that her kind little heart would prompt her to accept me, so that I might not suffer from disappointment, because she knows me too well to think I would marry her unless I loved her much."

"Well, I can relieve your mind on the subject, my dear Prince: Rachel loves you most fondly;" and I repeated word for word what she had said to me.

"Thank God for this, Madame de Meilhan! Another but Rachel I would never have wedded. I could not, for Stella's love is still fresh in my heart; but Rachel is a perfect image of my beloved Stella,—the same sweet face, the same gentle ways, the same heart and mind. Dear little thing, I thought she only looked upon me in the light of a father!"

We talked long in this strain, then returned home.

We had alighted from the carriage, and re-entered the grounds by the avenue facing the orangery. As we passed through it, I perceived some one seated by the old fountain, with its naïades and dolphins. "There!" I said to the Prince, "there is Rachel: speak to her yourself, and hear from her own lips what she has to say." He hesitated a moment.

"Do you think she will have courage to answer me?"

"I believe so; perhaps with more confidence than she would your mother; besides, being her guardian, you may, without overstepping the limits of propriety, propose to her; I answer for your being successful," I added in leaving him.

He silently bowed, and wended his way towards the pretty little fairy, whose heart, I am sure, must have been beating fast when she saw him approaching. I returned to the castle, thinking of the happiness of those two, as soon as both should have laid

bare their hearts before one another. Oh! what can be more blissful on earth than to love and be loved! And yet how many young men deeply despise love, because they have never known but the name of it, in inconstancies and levities! To them it is a flower which they crush before they inhale its fragrant perfume. Not having met any one on my way, I went straight to my room. I felt certain Rachel would run up to tell me of her happiness, and so she did. Her cheeks were flushed, and on her long silky lashes glistened dewdrops, which told that the emotions of her heart and soul had freely given way under the pressure of her bliss.

"He loves me, Madame de Meilhan—loves me as I love him."

Dear child, she seemed as if her soul were free from the world's thraldom—her raptures were such! And yet when the snowy winter of age shows itself on the head of her beloved one; when it has furrowed the pure forehead, and bent the erect form, and taken away the manly beauty of her idol, will she love still? or will regrets crowd on that still young heart, and make her wish for another love? God forbid that it should be so! And my prayer is, that until death parts them, she may never yearn for anything else but the friendship of her noble husband.

On that same evening, when we were all gathered round the hospitable fireside of our noble hostess, the Prince formally told us of his betrothal; and both he and pretty Rachel—prettier than ever under the

sweet burden of her happiness—accepted the most sincere and heartfelt congratulations of all present. They were not to be married until Mademoiselle de St. Aldegonde had reached her sixteenth year, and she was to return to her convent in Paris until then.

Monsieur de Blossac and Diane de Préville sang beautifully, so that we had a great deal of music of an evening, and, indeed, often in the daytime, when we remained indoors. During my stay at Villours, I painted roughly several groups of all of us for Madame de Marsillac, and finished M. de Lansac's miniature, to Jacqueline's great satisfaction.

At last my own dear husband returned. I went to meet him part of the way; I longed to be alone to welcome him, and we drove back together—a drive which seemed to me to last but a few minutes. His journey and absence had been troublesome; for the poor old Vicomte had died overwhelmed with debts; and after the sale of his small property and the payment of all debts, a sum bringing twelve pounds a year was all that remained to my husband, now Vicomte de Léoville-Meilhan. A few days after his arrival we took leave of our friends and returned to Paris. Redouté having heard of it, called, and three or four days after, I had the honour of receiving an invitation from the Empress Joséphine. I hastened to obey her wishes, and spent a whole afternoon with her Majesty, leaving her early the next day. I thought her very much altered: she looked ill, and

an indescribable air of sadness was depicted on her amiable face. Her theme was still the man she had so much loved and loved still. She longed to see his child, she said, and had been promised by Bonaparte that she should do so.

"I am terribly tormented about Bonaparte," she added, in a tremulous voice; "I wish he would not go to war with Russia—and mark my words, Madame de Léoville, it will be his downfall. I have had an interview with him not long ago, and knowing how superstitious he is, I told him of a dream I had about it; but I find there is no chance of his changing his mind. Once, long ago," she continued, deeply sighing, "I was very anxious on the score of some new schemes of his, and I was speaking of it to one of the gentlemen in attendance; days passed, and I broached the subject no more. One evening, when we were *en famille*, the chamberlain begged that a clever conjuror, who had just arrived, should be allowed to show some of his tricks.

"'By all means,' said Bonaparte; and the man was soon in our presence. Many of the tricks were admirably performed, and Bonaparte seemed intensely interested and amused. There was a dish of superb apples, and the Emperor took one of them, opened it, and found in it a slip of paper, on which these lines were written: 'Do not undertake the war; be warned in time.' His brow grew dark, and he called for the apples; they were brought back to him; he examined them narrowly, but there was not a sign to show they

had been meddled with; however, he ordered them to be opened. The poor conjuror trembled all over as he did so, and in every one of them the same warning was found. The Emperor's anger was very great; he ordered the man in be put in prison and have all his things destroyed. I could stand it no longer, and said it had been done through me; I was the guilty one.

"'Madame,' he said, in a thundering voice, 'mind your own affairs, and never dare to teach me—your master!'

"I was not forgiven for a long time, but the poor man escaped with only the fright; nothing was done to him. I had him paid handsomely, and never inquired who it was who had done my silent bidding, or rather anticipated my wish."

Poor Joséphine! this was my last visit to her; I never saw her afterwards.

Our mourning not being of very long duration, we had to entertain those who had been so kind to us during our stay in the provinces. Sir William and Lady Clayton, the De Sénantes, De St. Anges, and De Monbels came by turns; also the Prince de Marsillac—and whilst he was with us I obtained permission from the Abbess of the Sacré Cœur for Mademoiselle de St. Aldegonde to come and stay with us. I regretted greatly that Jacqueline and her mother would not join us, but I could easily understand how very little pleasure they could find away from their own home, so replete with sad and yet comforting reminiscences.

On New Year's Day, I gave a fancy-dress ball, which was attended by an immense number of people, all belonging to the Faubourg St. Germain, with the exception of the Duchesse d'Abrantès, my old friend Anaïs, and a few gentlemen who habitually frequented our salons. The dresses belonged for the most part to the style of Louis XIV. and Louis XV.'s Courts, although many had adopted some of the more remote periods.

As I was still in slight mourning, I dressed as a Chanoinesse, and M. de Léoville as a courtier of Francis the First's reign. It went off in the most brilliant manner, and if all the women did not shine by their beauty, they certainly did so by their grace, elegance, and magnificent dress.

On the "jour des rois," or "twelfth night," we had a large dinner-party; and at dessert an immense cake was brought on the table and cut up into equal pieces for the company present, and according to a very old provincial custom, I had the little Jeanne de Sénantes put under the table to call out for whom the pieces were to be. There are always a few put aside for the poor, who may have been allowed to enter the premises at the time. The first pieces called for by the childish voice of the little girl were: for the Good God, the Infant Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and St. Joseph; it is called, "la part des pauvres," and is sent to them immediately; then they begin to sing some, generally, rather doleful song, and go away after having had a good supper and some money. It

was a bright frosty night, and no doubt they felt grateful, that amidst our rejoicings we had not forgotten them. Then every other person in the room was named. The beans fell to the share of the Prince de Marsillac and Rachel: nothing could have been better; and they were King and Queen for the evening. My little fairy looked so well in her simple white dress; she wore not a single ornament, and was the most loveable-looking being of all of us. We danced the whole evening; and this closed for ever the festivities at the Hôtel de la Fère—at least, in our time.

Carnival came, with its masked balls, dinner-parties, and frolics of all kinds. I went to several, but among them the Marquise de Richebourg's ball was the cause of an adventure to me, which saved one man from destruction. Every person who went, had to unmask in the presence of the Comte de Flavacourt, the Marquise's brother, for fear of any one slipping in who had not been invited; a wise precaution to take, in so large an assembly.

I had procured an invitation for the Claytons, but just at the eleventh hour, my husband was summoned to the death-bed of an acquaintance of his; he, however, insisted on my going to the ball, and I therefore put myself under the chaperonage of my friends. I wore a dark-blue domino, with a bouquet of rosebuds: my black velvet mask partly covered my face, so that no one would have known me. It was the first time in my life I had looked on such a scene, and

I shall never forget the strange effect it had upon me. I felt almost frightened. The crowd was very great, and after walking for some time, I found myself separated from Sir William and his wife, and went to sit near a window from whence I could amuse myself in watching the dancing and dresses, which were extremely diversified and pretty. I had not been many minutes alone, when a domino, quite similar to mine, approached me and said in a hurried and unsteady voice: "For Heaven's sake tell me who you are, and whether you would render me the greatest service in the world!"

"If in my power to do so, I will; but I must know to whom I am speaking."

"Oh, for the love of God, first tell me who you are. I cannot confide in every one, and it is only because your domino and flowers are like mine, that I can possibly ask you a favour; the coincidence is so great, that it seems almost as if you had been sent here to save him. Please lose no time; tell me your name."

"The Vicomtesse de Léoville-Meilhan."

"Oh, then I may rely upon you, I know. In about an hour's time a black domino, with the Greek word '*Αει*' embroidered in gold letters upon it, will appear; as you wear the same flowers as I, he will say to you 'For ever,'—you must reply 'Sempre sola.' Tell him then that Solange will wait for him to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, near the pulpit, at St. Sulpice. To-night he intends, after bidding me farewell, to blow out his brains; therefore I will not stay here, and I

know he will not commit this dreadful act without seeing me once before leaving this world. Oh, Madame de Léoville, I am distracted! mad!—for we were to have been married soon. Yet I must fly from this place for fear of meeting him."

"But what is his reason for committing suicide?"

"He tells me in a note I received this morning, that he has lost more than his own fortune in playing, and cannot bear to face his parents, for they will never forgive him; and my parents would not give their consent to my marrying a man who is ruined. Oh, wretched creature that I am how shall I ever live: through such a direful misery!"

The unknown wrung her hands in despair, and then taking hold of mine said,—

"Promise me not to reveal my secret to any one—except to your husband, if you like; I know he is a noble heart."

She then took off the flowers she wore, threw them away, and escaped before I had had time to insist upon knowing her name.

"You seem quite forlorn, beau masque," said a richly-dressed oriental to me: "if your lover has proved false, accept my arm, and let us take a turn in the salons; methinks you are young and pretty, and you should not remain thus isolated."

"Perhaps if I took off my mask you would be disappointed, and see some wretched old crone, instead of the pretty face you are kind enough to ascribe to me."

"Nay, fair one, I never make a mistake; besides, the voice is not croaky—it is sweet and musical, and from the glittering light of your lovely orbs, I know you are young. Come, take my arm."

"No, thank you," I replied; "I am waiting for some one, who in a few minutes may be here, and I must not move; I am grateful all the same for your pretty speech and kindness, but here I must stop."

He made a graceful salaam to me, and slowly retreated in search of some other lonely one. Many amusing and witty speeches did I listen to, whilst waiting for the unknown, and in the meanwhile the Claytons came back to me, but I told them I had a message for some one, and they went away. I was beginning to feel rather tired of sitting, when a tall domino approached me; the Greek word was very conspicuous, and after looking for a second or two at me he said,—"For ever." "Sempre sola," I replied.

"Then, dear Solange, you have had my note; I come to bid you farewell in this motley throng—a strange place for an eternal adieu; but I thought I could see you nowhere else: thank you for coming."

I told him at once what had passed between the young girl and myself.

"Ah, Madame de Léoville," he said, taking one of my hands in his, "how lucky that your ears alone should have heard this; I know you will not betray us, and therefore I will tell you my name: I am the Vicomte de Charnizey."

"What," I said, "the godson of the Princesse de Marsillac? I have often heard about you: and the lady to whom I spoke is, then, Mademoiselle de Cazaman?"

"The same."

"Now you must absolutely tell me what has taken place, and how you have ruined yourself."

"Last month a friend of mine, who has been travelling in Germany, sent me word that a friend of his, Baron Eckendorf, and another gentleman, were coming to Paris, and he had given them letters of introduction to me; he begged I would make things agreeable to them, which I did. Last night, as we were together at his hotel, he proposed a game at 'écarté.' I acquiesced, and the first few games I won, but gradually I lost,—lost, till my head almost burst with frenzy; still on, on I went playing, hoping Fortune's wheel might turn round to me; but vain delusion!—for when the grey dawn paled the light in the room, not only had I lost the whole of my fortune, but had gambled away besides 200,000 francs; which my father will have to pay."

"But it is a perfect swindle, M. de Charnizey; no gentleman would look upon this as a debt of honour! You may depend he is nothing else but a blackleg; and I would certainly not repay him."

"He is not, I can assure you, Madame; my friend says he is of very good family."

"Have you ever heard before these words of Voltaire: 'Comte de France, Baron d'Allemagne, Prince de Russie, Marquis d'Italie—mauvaise compagnie'?

But tell me, where did the Baron's friend stand whilst you were playing ?"

"First behind the Baron, and then he came to me."

"Just so ; and from the time he stood behind you, you lost ?"

"Yes."

"Very good ; he either had cards in his hands, or by understood signs he made his friend know what your cards were. Now, will you faithfully promise me to do what I tell you ?"

"I will."

"Take your best friend with you to-morrow, and go and propose to the Baron another game ; keep your friend on your side, and you will see that you are likely to win back part of your fortune, if not the whole."

"But if he refuses ?"

"He is not likely to do so ; but if he does, your friends must interfere. And now remember that Mdlle. de Cazaman will expect you at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, at St. Sulpice's near the pulpit. She is in the most dreadful state, and it will be a great consolation for her to see you. Now give me your arm ; I want to find out my friends."

"How can I sufficiently thank you for your good advice!—and to think of my stupidity, not to have thought about what you have told me!"

"Two heads are better than one, M. de Charnizey. Be sure to call on me on Wednesday afternoon ; I shall long to hear of your success. And now I see

my two friends, and will not detain you. Good-bye: I wish you all imaginable luck."

Supper was soon afterwards announced; we all remarked that it was rather amusing to find out who the people were with whom one had had some fun. After supper I danced several times, and we left the Hôtel de Brizolles about four o'clock, when the streets presented an unusual stir, crowds of carriages carrying people away from the dissipations of the night.

The next day I dined at the Duchesse d'Abrantè's, where I enjoyed myself very much, and met one or two old friends, or rather school companions, who had married some of Bonaparte's favourites.

Ash Wednesday dawned—grey, dismal and cold, as if to mourn over the departed gaieties of the preceding days, which had been so brilliant with sunshine, so cloudless and joyful: but thus pass away the glories of the world, always leaving regrets behind for the past, and often giving birth to melancholy forebodings for the future. About three in the afternoon, M. de Charnizey was announced. He had a pleasing face and agreeable manners; and as I looked at him, I hoped that so bright a man might not suffer from the bad company in which he had so unfortunately been thrown. My husband was present, and we both heard the sequel of what I have related before. As I had suggested, he had compelled the Baron to give him his revenge, and as I had felt sure, the luck had turned to the honest man. The Baron had exclaimed it was not fair for the Vicomte to have his friend be-

hind his chair; however, M. de Danville insisted upon it, and M. de Charnizey only lost a few hundred francs.

"I can never repay what I owe you, Madame," he said to me; "had it not been for you, probably I should now lie an icy corpse in my coffin. Accept, I pray you, my best and most sincere thanks, as well as those of Mdlle. de Cazaman, who hopes some day to offer hers *in propriâ personâ*."

After he was gone, Edouard asked me to go with him and look at some pictures he wanted to get rid of, in order to replace them by some he had from his uncle's; and as we were in doubt about their removal, we went into a small room, very seldom used, and in which were some paintings of no value whatever,—especially the portrait of M. de Ferval's father's first wife and that of her son. She was represented as a coarse, ugly-looking woman, with her boy on her knees, whose even childish face bore, and the eyes especially the seeds of evil. M. de Ferval, young and poor, had been entrapped by an immensely rich widow, whose low birth ought to have prevented him committing such a folly, especially as the money was wholly and solely settled on her child, but in an unlucky hour he yielded to her entreaties, and married the virago, who during several years became the bane of his life. At her death the boy was eight years old, and when M. de Ferval married again—this time a lovely, well-born, but penniless girl—the wicked boy tormented poor Madame de Ferval to such an extent that

she begged her husband to send him to school,—especially after the birth of two children, who were constantly in peril of being tortured or killed by the wicked boy. It was said that the ugliness of Mademoiselle de Ferval was owing to a terrible fright her mother had had in seeing at night a hideous face, which young Poitevin had made and placed in Madame de Ferval's room. Once he set fire to the cradle of the little boy, and M. de Ferval gave him a severe punishment, but the next day Poitevin disappeared, and no one had ever heard aught of him, notwithstanding all the researches that had been made. Thus the family had enjoyed the fortune of Poitevin, as no relations had ever sprung up to claim the money, with which the Hotel de la Fère and Bransac had been purchased. So many years had passed away, that the name had been perfectly in oblivion, and I never could imagine how that dreadful picture had been allowed to remain where it was. We decided upon its being burnt, and gave orders that the next day should witness the "auto da fé." But "l'homme propose et Dieu dispose," as will be seen presently.

We had been full of plans about rebuilding Bransac; and on that same Wednesday evening, Edouard had put the finishing touch to a very pretty drawing he had executed, in order to give it to an architect, who was going to undertake the erection of the Château.

"Monsieur le Vicomte is wanted," said the footman; "a gentleman is waiting in the ante-room."

"Ask the name and business," replied M. de Léoville.

The man soon returned, and said it was on very important business, and my husband directed him to take the person who wanted him into his study. As I was wondering what it could be, I mechanically twisted my rings, and in doing so, my eyes fell on that of the Vicomtesse de Chabannes, which had never left me. One more pearl had turned almost black; I shuddered: was there any misfortune in store for us, and was that man the bearer of it? A quarter of an hour passed, which seemed to me interminable, for I could do nothing to divert my mind; then the footman came in again.

"Will Madame la Vicomtesse go to the study? M. le Vicomte wants her."

I rose, and, with a beating heart and a sense of misery hanging over me, I entered the study. There sat opposite my husband the most ill-looking creature I had ever beheld: his iron-grey hairs were long and lanky, the face blotchy all over, and the eyes—oh, the eyes,—where had I seen them? Yes, I knew; they were the eyes of Poitevin; no longer with the fire of youth, but still retaining the ferocious expression that they possessed in childhood; they had not changed so far. He was well dressed, but seemed to me the personification of vulgarity and lowness.

"This gentleman," said my husband to me, "calls himself Poitevin, and comes to claim the property

left to him by his mother, and which has remained until now in the De Ferval family."

"Yes, Madame," said the man, with a ferocious sneer, "all you possess is mine; I have long suffered, whilst you enjoyed my wealth, but as it was not your fault, I will allow you a week longer to look for shelter elsewhere. Your husband tells me that he won't be able to pay me back all the money you have spent since you were married; I don't believe you are so poor as he wants to make out; however, as one cannot draw blood from a stone, if I find it is the truth, I'll let you go free, although I despise all you aristocrats, and wish you had all been beheaded in the good old times of the republic. I shall be magnanimous, however, and the convict who has just left Toulon, after having been there twenty years—aye, and on and off into other prisons, since he was twelve years old—will, I say, show the world that he is not so black as he looks."

"But how can you guarantee to us that you are Poitevin?" I replied.

"Is there still in this house a picture of a woman with a child on her knees—the woman tall and ugly? I remember my mother well, and her temper too. How she used to beat me, to be sure!—I suppose that is the reason I never forgot her. How such a white-faced, effeminate aristocrat could ever have married her I know not; he must have had a stomach indeed. But this is neither here nor there: I want to know, I say, whether such a picture is here?"

"I suppose you intend to lay your claims before a court of justice," interposed my husband, "and then all you wish to know will be answered you; of course you will understand, M. Poitevin, that, not knowing you, we cannot, in justice to ourselves, reply at once to your questions. If you are the rightful heir, you may be sure that justice will be done you; and I feel certain that my wife would agree with me at once in remitting to you your lawful property, without the slightest objection, were we satisfied that you are M. Poitevin."

"And who else should I be?" said the convict, with an awful oath, and a terrible scowl on his face. "Shall I tell you all that happened to me since I left those —— aristocrats' house?"

"If you like to do so, we are both ready to listen," answered M. de Léoville calmly.

"Well then, listen: my dying mother said to me —but at the time I scarcely knew what she meant, and forgot all about it till I was older—'You are rich: all that is here belongs to you, and——' she could not finish the sentence, and all she had said soon passed from my memory. I cannot complain of the treatment of Ferval nor that of his wife; they were kinder to me than I deserved, for I was the most wicked scoundrel in existence for my age. You see I don't mean to make myself out better than I was. One day I tried to kill one of the babies, and the father of course punished me; the next day I set fire to the cradle of the other, and then I was shut up

in a dark room with bread and water, and received, in the meantime, a good hiding from one of the servants. That made me furious, and one evening, when it was quite dark, I managed to leap down from the window into the garden: it was an awful height, and I don't know how it was that I did not get killed. I was rather stunned, though; however, I soon recovered, and scaled the garden wall, which was low, and slipped down into the street. I was in the habit of stealing, and had always money with me. As luck would have it, a day or two before—more for mischief than use—I had taken a small bauble, which I think they call a locket, and hidden it in one of my pockets; it contained small miniatures of Ferval and his wife, and that I have still, and will show it to you."

Out of his waistcoat pocket came the locket; it contained indeed the pictures of M. and Madame de Ferval; however, we made no comment on the subject, and begged him to proceed.

"Well," he resumed, "I knew not whither to go, but thought I might just as well first go and regale myself after the fasting I had had. I went a long way before stopping, as I was afraid of being taken back to the house I had left, and crossed the Pont-Henri IV. Once on that side of the river I felt safe. I went into a pastry-cook's shop, ate till I nearly burst, and then thought of looking for shelter. I felt rather afraid of the police, and seeing an old woman seated at a stall, I asked her whether she would tell me where I could spend the night. 'Come with me,

my pretty darling,' said the old crone—mark, I was always a plain boy,—'I have nearly sold my apples, and we will go home together.'

"I helped the old witch to carry her things, and we walked through narrow, dirty, dark streets, and at last arrived at her den. It was an awful place, and I would have given much to have been able to escape, but she locked the door, and after making me relate to her my adventures, she made me lie down on a dirty heap of rags, which made me feel quite sick; however, I was so tired that I soon fell asleep, having previously taken the precaution of putting the locket into my mouth and my money into my shoes, for I strongly suspected she was a thief. The next morning she woke me very early, gave me some breakfast, such as it was, and told me she was going to mass—the old hypocrite—and would come and fetch me soon, to take me and place me with some respectable person.

"As soon as she was gone I tried the door, kicked it over and over again, until at last it gave way, and before any of the neighbours who had heard the row could prevent me, I was rushing like mad into the street. I heard on all sides cries of 'Thief! thief!' Some carts luckily passing, I climbed into one of them, driven by a boy, and throwing myself down, I was soon out of sight. The boy was returning from market; we soon entered into conversation, and I proposed to him to change his clothes with mine, as soon as we should be alone on the road.

"'But it won't quite do,' said the boy, 'unless you do so before we arrive at the turnpike. You will be detected there by the people when they look into the cart; you see you be a gentleman. But look here,—get down at the next turning, and if you take across the field, I'll pick you up at the end of it; now look sharp, I sha'n't be long.'

"I did as I was told, and when we met again we changed clothes, and I walked to the nearest town. I had so little money left that I thought I might just as well steal a loaf, and I did so unperceived, and then pondered in my mind what next I had better do. I entered into conversation with a man, a low vagabond like myself, so we arranged to become chums; that night he was to break into a large country house, for he knew that the people were to go to a party. I was rather new in the trade, and was soon caught by one of the servants, tied and kept till the gendarmes were sent for, and was taken to prison. I remained there two months, then was sent to a reformatory school. I had given a false name, and although I could have returned to the Fervals, I preferred leading the lawless life which took me to the 'Bagne.' It would be too long to unroll before you all my adventures: suffice it to say that I scarcely ever was two days out of prison, till I was sent to Toulon; I was a most desperate character. Often I had tried to return to Paris, and I used to tell the judges when I was taken, that I was a rich gentleman, etc., but they would not believe me; and now here I am, and I

intend as soon as I am in possession of my fortune to go to the States; that is the place for the sort of man I am."

"How did you find out that this place had belonged to M. de Ferval?" inquired M. de Léoville.

"I had not forgotten the house where we lived, and straightway I went there. The Concierge was dead, but his old wife still lived in the lodge with her son. She told me all the history of the Fervals, and when I asked her whether she knew me again, she put on her spectacles, and after a few minutes she said,—

"'No one could ever forget such eyes, nor their expression: you are, I feel certain, young Poitevin, the first mistress's child.'

"'Yes,' I said, and asked her 'whether she could give me any information about you,—whether you were owing all to the Fervals, or had any money of your own.' That she could not answer. I bethought myself of finding out the lawyers of the family, and after days of fruitless search, I stumbled upon the one who had succeeded my mother's solicitor, but he never had had any business to transact for the family: at the death of his predecessor all had passed into other hands. However, he promised to help me to find out yours, and when I called again at his office he told me the name. I went, but could not get much out of the rascal; however, I feel pretty certain that I shall get my own. I have now numbers of witnesses, and I fear not."

In finishing these words he got up, and with a horrible laugh added,—

"Don't you attempt to purloin anything out of this place, and be very grateful to me that I don't turn you all out of it. Good night! you'll soon hear from me again."

It would be useless to describe the terrible feelings that crowded into our hearts! We had very little doubt that he was the legitimate heir, and had it not been for the rascality of the man, we would have at once given up all to him; however, we thought it better to let the law take its course and abide by the result of the verdict.

We examined all the servants,—trusty ones they had ever been, and were from the time of M. de Ferval's second wife; none of them had ever given any trouble,—and they swore that nothing had ever been asked them about the family, and they had not seen the man before. We told them that in all probability they would have to leave us at the end of the week, as we must remove somewhere else, and that we should be unable henceforth to keep more than one servant, if even that. They showed much sorrow, and I was glad to see they were not ungrateful.

Three days after that scene we left the Hotel for some obscure lodgings, waiting there the result of the proceedings for a little while; but as it promised to be months before anything could be settled, we had to leave Paris, as my husband could not any longer

bear the place where we had known so much happiness.

He was determined not to accept any of the kind offers of his relations, and to that I readily assented. Dependence to us both would have been terrible. We had only taken our clothes and the few presents that had been made to us, now and then, by our friends and relations—otherwise, all remained intact; all the jewels were left, and I even regretted to take what, however, would have been useless to Poitevin. My good Célestine would not leave us, although she knew we could not pay her wages. Poor girl! she fell a victim to her devotion to us.

Our lawyer, a good honest man, did all in his power to procure some employment for my husband, and after a month we left Paris for a small sea-side town on the coast of Normandy, where he got the appointment of under-secretary to the "sous-préfet" of the place—a brother-in-law to M. Aubert; and there we were to wait for the final decision of the Court. A young barrister had undertaken to plead our cause without remuneration if we lost, and if we won, of course his fee was to be handsomely paid. My husband and I were examined at the beginning of the trial—how little did I expect, when at P——, witnessing the trial of the Fleurys, that so short a time after, we should have to appear in the witness-box!—but as soon as our examination was over, we refused to appear any longer; it was, we knew, perfectly useless. I forget how many months it lasted, and the

number of witnesses examined, but at last we heard that Poitevin had been recognized the lawful heir, and had sold the Hôtel de la Fère to some rich parvenu; and soon, I suppose, we were all left in oblivion.

I believe I bore our misfortune more easily than my dear husband; and if I greatly grieved at times—not in his presence—it was to see him deprived of all the luxuries he had been used to. We had now barely the necessaries of life, for his employment brought him only at the rate of £15 a year, and we had only besides £12. Nothing but our devoted love for one another remained to us, to help us in treading the hard path that it had pleased Providence to lay for us.

We inhabited a small cottage with two rooms, besides a kitchen, and a garret in which our faithful Célestine slept. To her we entirely owed our comforts, if one can give such a name to what was to us inwardly—for we never complained aloud—perfect miseries. As we had to furnish the rooms, almost all the ready money we had went at once, and it was lucky that Célestine found some needlework to do, in which I helped, so that we were able just to keep body and soul together. The season was bitterly cold, and we suffered much. Nearly the whole day we were without a fire, lighting it only half an hour before M. de Léoville returned from his office.

Poor Célestine!—she had readily turned cook and housemaid; with our downfall her attendance upon

me had ceased; I soon learnt how to wait upon myself. How thankful I felt then that I had been taught to work: for what should we have done, had I been helpless! I also had hopes that in time I might make use of my talent in painting; but the place was small; there were very few rich people, and it was not easy to set to work. Besides, I must confess I had a great dislike to going among strangers, and felt a sort of inward thankfulness, that at first I had not to go out for the purpose of getting my livelihood. M. de Léoville shrank, as well as myself, from the curiosity of strangers, and we kept entirely aloof from every one; although a few people had made advances to us, we most politely declined all intercourse with our neighbours. I will pass quickly over our very uninteresting life; the description of one day will be sufficient to give an idea of those that followed throughout the year. Célestine—poor girl, the change must have been to her, in its way, nearly as great as it was to us!—got up at five and did her housework; prepared breakfast, and often was at needlework until my husband and I were ready for that meal, which had to be early on account of the long walk he had to take before reaching the "Sous-Préfecture," where he was to be punctually at nine.

Whilst this meal went on, she did our bedroom; and after removing the breakfast-things, she either went out for what she wanted, or sat at her work, and I did the same. Oh, how I used to think of

the past, and repeated often, with Francesca da Rimini,—

> "Nessun Maggior dolore
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria."

In the middle of the day we ate a crust of bread,—a bitter bread, often moistened by our tears. We sat with only small chaufferettes, a great comfort to the indigent, for they at least kept our feet warm. But what shall I say of our poor fingers, aching with the icy atmosphere of the room! At five, when my husband returned, we dined—Célestine generally contrived to invent some little delicacy, out of nothing, for my dear one—and when that last meal was over and the things removed, we sat in darkness for an hour or so talking of the brilliant past, and thinking more often of our gloomy future. We had insisted on Célestine joining us, for she was no longer a dependant, but a friend. However, she never presumed to be anything else than in the days of yore; and if possible, she was more respectful still, than in the days of our prosperity.

When our solitary candle was lighted, M. de Léoville read some time aloud, or drew, and at nine we retired to bed, thankful if we could forget in sleep the wretchedness of our present life. Only those who have suffered from the caprices of fortune, as we did, can realize what I am imperfectly describing. The only variation in our life was on Sundays: we went to church twice, and during the summer took long walks

on the most solitary parts of the coast, listening to the mournful moans of the great sea, which found ready echoes in our hearts. Yet we both of us tried to deceive one another by an assumed cheerfulness, which had no existence in our sorrowful souls; thus, we at times appeared as if perfectly resigned to our fate, and walking in the glorious sunshine which rejoiced others, whilst to us it was no more than a gloomy mist,—a horizon which henceforth was never to clear up, for my own dear, sweet husband.

During the summer months, a rich farmer made a proposal which I accepted very readily. It was to undertake a picture representing a "scène de famille." I walked there every day, accompanied by Célestine, and M. de Léoville came to fetch me in the evening. They were good, kind-hearted people, and we experienced some kindness from them, by their sending to us fruits, eggs, and butter, which were very acceptable to us. They paid me handsomely for the picture and I was able thus to make my husband much more comfortable than heretofore. He was now, as he had ever been, the sunshine of my life; I entirely lived for him; and to think of him and how to make his existence less irksome, was the only shred of happiness that I had carried away from the past. His health was not good, and it was an additional torment to me, especially when he was absent; for then darkness spread a veil around me which no ray of light could pierce through.

I must confess I regretted much our generosity in the time of our opulence; for had we kept the money

produced by the sale of Beaupré, instead of giving it as a dowry to Marguerite de Meilhan, and had I not given entirely away the small fortune of my aunt to poor old Fanchette, the sums would have been more adequate to our wants. Ah! and if dear old Doctor Joinville had lived, I felt sure, that more than once we should have received anonymous gifts from his generous hand.

During the summer of our second year of exile, the scarlet fever spread over the whole place with fearful rapidity; it was of a most malignant nature, and my own dear Edouard was taken with it. Once more, one of the pearls of my ring had turned black. Célestine and I nursed him in it; our cares, however, soon proved unavailing, and in less than a week he had crossed over to the empire of the dead. Bliss for him, but unutterable misery for me! Oh, why did I not follow him then? But it was ordered otherwise, and I was left to mourn not only him, but also my poor Célestine, who—scarcely had my own adored one been carried to his last abode—was seized with the same fever, and the faithful and generous girl soon followed him to the grave.

I escaped the epidemic, but for several weeks I fell into a dreadful nervous state, from which I thought I should never have recovered, and thankful was I when such thoughts were in my head; yet I grew better after a while. I was destined to a little more misery on earth. A Sister of Charity came to nurse me, and now and then the old parish priest offered

me some consolations; but alas! at the time I felt almost rebellious, and when I was able to be once more about I became still more so. I could not see why the being I had so much loved should be taken away from me, and yet now and then it seemed almost impossible for me to believe in the complete disappearance of my dear husband, especially when I was surrounded by all the objects which reminded me so forcibly of him: I would not, could not believe he was dead. His dear face, the sound of his voice, the charm of his manners, were so vividly present to me, that he often appeared to be still there. I spoke to him, called him, and fancied I was answered, so that although he was gone he was not totally lost to me. It was like the setting sun, which, when it has disappeared, still leaves some of its rays visible. But, alas! soon the cruel reality stood before me; little by little my illusions vanished, and I knew that I was truly alone in the world. Alone! Oh, how cold, how frigid the word is: what an abyss of misery to me was meant by it!

Not far from my little abode lived a Mademoiselle Giroux, a woman in the decline of life, who now and then had spoken to Célestine; and when I was left desolate, she came and most kindly offered me any assistance I might require. I accepted her good offices, for I was unable to get out much; and gradually she told me her history, which was a very simple one. She had when very young left her native town with an English family, in the capacity of nurse; had

saved money during the forty years she had been in England, and had returned to die on the old soil, living comfortably in a nice little cottage she had bought, and hoping to end her days in peace and quietness.

"Why should you not go to England?" she said one day to me; "you, Madame, well educated as you are, would be sure to easily find a nice family, where you could instruct the children and would be well paid."

"I do not think I could make up my mind to do that," I said; "I would prefer poverty with my freedom, to comparative luxuries with servitude! for it must be a horrible thing."

"Well, for a lady like yourself, it very likely would be. However, if at any time you would like me to write to a friend of mine in London, I will do so, and you could lodge there until you found something. I know two booksellers who might very likely help you; many people apply to them for governesses."

"Oh, how that word grated on my ears! I, the Vicomtesse de Léoville, who had lived among the highest of the land, become a governess! I thanked Mademoiselle Giroux, but with no intention of availing myself of her offer. First of all, the idea of leaving the place where he whom I had loved so fondly, and whose image was still as vivid in my mind's eye as when he and I walked together in prosperity or misfortune—was buried, seemed impossible, and I said so to her.

"We must all leave some one behind us at one

time or other," she replied, her black eyes glistening with tears. "I never was married, but loved once—long ago! Death came also, and cut off his dear life in a foreign land, where we had met, and where we parted, he to stay in peace until the time comes for him to be called before his Maker to be judged, I to tread life's rugged pathway, till I also am called to render my last account. Sometimes I think perhaps, after all, it was for the best. We might have been unhappy; and now I imagine him as he was forty years ago, and there is no bitterness in my heart. Had he lived, I might have rued the day I had married him. Depend upon it, Madame, everything is for the best in this world. I will take care of your husband's grave, when you are away, and also of Célestine's, and write to you now and then, telling you of them."

I wished I had been as much of an optimist as Mademoiselle Giroux; however, I could not bring myself to think anything of the sort.

Once more the Vicomtesse de Chabannes' magic ring showed signs of some new catastrophe in store for me; and scarcely a month had elapsed after my conversation with Mademoiselle Giroux, when, as I was going to the bank, in order to receive my quarterly income—aye, and what an income it was! —I had a letter from our lawyer telling me of a new misfortune. The mortgage upon which M. de Léoville's money had been lent, proved a bad one, and Monsieur Aubert could only save three-quarters of the lent capital. The good man had

sent me nevertheless the usual interest. I always fancied it was out of his own pocket, though he pretended not. In the meantime he advised me to apply to my relations, but I shrank as much from that as I did from becoming a governess. This last misfortune decided me to take the advice of Mademoiselle Giroux. She settled everything for me, and after having sold the furniture—such as it was—and two pictures I had by me, I found myself in possession of a few hundred francs, which I trusted would enable me to live until I had succeeded in finding something in London.

My great and terrible trial was to bid farewell to the lowly mound which covered the remains of my beloved husband. There, day after day I had sat, prayed and wept, and evoked the adored phantom of my own Edouard; I could scarcely tear myself from it. Two simple black crosses marked—one, the last resting-place of the high-born, and the other that of the low-born according to the world's notions, but high in feelings and deeds. I had planted some flowers round the graves; I gathered a few, and with an aching heart I took the last farewell of the place which had seen my tears, heard my bitter complaints, the wailings of my miserable soul; and I took away with me a sketch of that hallowed spot which probably would never be again trodden by my footsteps.

THIRD PART.

I WENT to Calais, and from thence embarked for England. I shall never forget the effect the first sight of the English coast produced upon me. I had left a bright blue sky in France, and as we entered the Thames, an indescribable gloom seemed to hover around us. It was a grey, dull sky, with such a heavy, smoky atmosphere that it made me feel ten times more miserable. The shipping was quite a novel sight to me; and the busy river alive with boats of all descriptions, would at any other time have attracted and amused me; but in my present frame of mind everything appeared wretched, and I looked upon all surrounding objects with tearful eyes, and wished that the Almighty had taken me when He called my dear husband to Himself.

I was met at the Custom House by Mrs. Jeffrey—Mademoiselle Giroux's friend, a portly, good-natured looking woman, who spoke a few words of French, whereas, I am ashamed to say, I could not say more than yes and no in her native tongue. She most kindly

busied herself about my luggage, and then we went to her house, which was situated in a small narrow street, not far from St. James's Palace, where her husband was groom. I was delighted to find that he came home late at night and went early in the morning; although he was always respectful when several times on Sundays we crossed one another's path.

Mrs. Jeffrey's children were all married. She seemed in tolerably good circumstances, and having little to do, she was always ready to accompany me when I went out. I tried several booksellers, but having no recommendations I could not get anything. However, I was lucky in selling a few drawings; they represented some of my interviews with the Emperor and Joséphine, and they were readily bought. I had already been six weeks in England when I began to suffer most terribly from my head. A year before I had struck myself very badly behind the left ear, and had been in great pain; for a time it ceased, then it returned, and finally I had forgotten all about it; but since I arrived in London it had begun again, with an intensity impossible to describe, and at last my good landlady insisted on my seeing a doctor. "My husband knows of one," she said, "who speaks French; he is a good kind man, and a perfect gentleman too, and you must see him. I had been in bed for several days, and I therefore yielded, though much against my will.

"Doctor West, if you please, ma'am," said Mrs. Jeffrey the next morning.

The Doctor entered; he was an elderly man, with a most remarkable countenance, and as he spoke French fluently, I was soon able to converse with him about my ailments. He looked very serious, and after a little time he said,—

"I fear, madam, an operation will be necessary, and as it would be utterly impossible—at least, I am afraid so—that it should be done here, if you will take my advice, you will agree to your being removed to the hospital. You will require attention which cannot be given you here, and for a small sum I shall be able to see that you have a little room to yourself, and you will be carefully tended by the nurses."

My heart grew sick at this proposal; but what was I to do? I thought of the trouble and annoyance it would give Mrs. Jeffrey if I stopped in the house—especially if I died—and I gave my consent to the Doctor's proposal. Arrangements were made with the landlady, who promised to keep all my things for me, and also to come and see me as often as she possibly could. Towards evening Doctor West's carriage was at the door, and Mrs. Jeffrey took me to the hospital. Oh, what a night I passed! I had been once to the hospital of——, where the good Sister Silvine, who had nursed me during my illness was; and I had forgotten that there would be no Sister of Charity to soothe me, but merely hirelings, who whatever their feelings may be, can never approach those dear, good, devoted creatures, who do everything for

the love of God alone. Oh, how different from Sister Silvine, what a contrast, was the tall gaunt, hard-featured woman, who nursed me, to the gentle, pretty, and nobly born sister! However, the next day I found that I was not to be so miserably treated as I expected, for after the visit of the doctors and students—that was another fearful trial—Doctor West soon returned and told me that I should have to wait a few days before the operation could be performed, and that a young house-student or surgeon—I forgot which—would see that everything was properly done for me.

Towards six o'clock, the young man came and asked the nurse whether I had had my tea, to which she replied that I had refused to touch anything. He approached my bed, took my hand and felt my pulse, and touched gently the abscess that had formed behind my ear, and which caused me such agony that I could not possibly open my mouth to swallow my food, or even to articulate a few words. Whilst he was feeling my pulse, I had leisure to examine him; he looked about two-and-twenty; his face was not handsome, but still there was something extremely winning in it. The eyes were greyish brown, soft and impressive, the mouth was too large, the lips slightly thick, but as soon as they parted they displayed a row of beautiful teeth; and his was a sunny smile, which was very refreshing after the hard face of nurse Higgins. The brow was like polished marble; the hair of that rich brown which in the sun

is so beautiful, and his hands, though not well shaped, were as white and as smooth as those of a woman who has not had them spoiled by washing. It was difficult for us to understand one another, as he knew very little French; luckily I remembered that my dear husband had taught me some Latin, and we soon got on tolerably well.

"You must allow me to feed you," he said, "for it is perfectly necessary you should keep up your strength for the operation. I have sent for a cup which has a long spout, and by gently putting it through your teeth, I think we shall manage very well."

All this was said gently and kindly—no mother could have tended her child more tenderly than he did; and thus day after day he came to feed me at all my meals, and often between he looked in to see how I was. I always longed for the hours when he came; sometimes he would sit down and tell me some story, which I did not always understand, as there was such an odd mixture of expressions, but I liked to hear him talk. The dreadful day for the operation dawned at last, and I told him I thought I could not endure it—I preferred dying.

"It must be done," he said imperatively; "but you are so frightfully weak that you will have to be carried downstairs: I am very strong and will do so. Higgins must dress you, and in an hour's time, or rather before, I shall be here."

He took me in his arms, as if I had been a child, and laid me on the board for the operation.

"Don't be frightened," he said, "when they all come; I will stand by you all the time; and the surgeon who will operate on you is very clever. It will be done in no time."

Voices like the buzz of bees were heard, the door was opened, and I saw such a number of men enter, that my heart began to beat fast, and I felt terrified, though I had already once before seen a similar number.

"Shut your eyes," whispered young Barrington to me, "and try to compose yourself."

I did as he told me, and after waiting for several minutes I felt the cold steel on my neck. I fainted, and when I opened my eyes I was back in my bed—Doctor West and Mr. Barrington, with the nurse, at the side of it.

"It is all right," said the kind old doctor, "but you must not attempt to speak. There will be some difficulty in inserting liquids even through your lips; however Barrington will see to that. He is a kind, clever nurse," said the old man, gently slapping the young man's shoulder, "and will do his best for you, I know."

I could not answer, and only expressed with my eyes that I knew and had experienced it. Through a small tube he poured some drops of liquid to send me to sleep. I did not awake till the night was far advanced; and Mr. Barrington was patiently waiting for my waking up.

"I am going to ask you a few questions," he said: "when you mean no, leave your hand on the counterpane; when yes, raise it up. Do you feel any pain?"

—"Yes." "Very great since you awoke?"—"Yes." "Would you like a sleeping draught after you have had your tea?"—"Yes;" and so on.

He had more difficulty this time in separating my lips than he had had before, and the pain was greater; however after much trouble his task was accomplished, and for more than a week he had to perform the same offices for me.

Mrs. Jeffrey was allowed to see me but seldom, and as I was not permitted to talk she said she would wait until I was better. At last I became convalescent, and Doctor West had the kindness to send his wife to me. She was a charming old lady, full of kindness, who soon won my confidence, and I told her of my misfortunes. "Poor child, poor child!" she kept saying; "I must see about something being done for you."

A week after, the doctor and his wife insisted on my removing to their house—a kindness which it seemed to me I could never repay. The last evening of my stay at the hospital was the occasion of rather an amusing little scene between young Barrington and myself. He was often in the habit of using the word "thou" to me, which in French is only used between relations, and even among the higher classes is not of common occurrence. He came looking very much excited, and said with a dark brow,—

"Tu ne m'aimes pas."

I looked perfectly amazed, for I had never dreamt of liking him more than I would have done a brother, and felt rather awkward.

"Tu ne me réponds pas; je le savais bien, tu me hais."

"My dear Mr. Barrington," I said, "I do not understand you. I feel for you the greatest gratitude, and I like you as much as if you were my own brother: what can I do more?"

He took my hands, kissed them and said,—

"Oh what a fool I am! but yet I dreamed of such a possibility. Then say that you hate me, despise me, —anything you like."

"I shall say no such thing, because it would be a falsehood. Will you be my brother? I have no one on earth now, and I shall always look back with pleasure to the time when your cares were so valuable to me."

"I care not for gratitude—it is a cold word; what I want is love, and if you cannot give it to me, then I must be miserable all my life."

"No, you will not, and as soon as I am gone from here you will forget me."

"Very well, very well," he said, getting up and looking daggers at me (I could scarcely ever have dreamt that those soft eyes could be so ferocious); "I will leave you, and never see you again."

"At least say farewell," I said; "let me shake hands with you; I do not wish to part with you thus, and——"

But he was gone, and I must confess I felt very sorry: he had been so truly kind to me, that I wished I could have expressed to him my heartfelt gratitude. It was getting late; nurse Higgins had

come for the last time, when a knock at the door was heard, and without waiting for an answer, Mr. Barrington entered.

"Higgins, go at once to number four, please, and administer this dose. Madame, here is yours, and you must take it, please, before going to sleep."

I thought it rather strange, as I had already had one earlier; however I said nothing, and waited till the woman was gone, to hear what he had to say.

"I am a brute," he said in a gentle voice; "and I am sure, although you wish not to do so, you perfectly hate me, and I deserve it."

"Do not speak thus, Mr. Barrington; you only distress me. Come, shake hands, and let us be friends. Some of these days we may meet again; and, forlorn as I am, I want a sincere friend—one I can entirely depend upon: why should not you be one to me? For if ever I were in want of anything I should prefer applying to you rather than a stranger."

There was the old sunny smile on his young face; it had returned like the sunshine after a heavy shower. He pressed my hand in his, and said,—

"You are much too kind to have forgiven me: a thousand thanks! Good-night; I shall see you again to-morrow morning, and as I dine every other Sunday at the Wests', I shall see you there. But take this before I go: it is a soothing and pleasant draught, and will do you good."

Like a flash of lightning passing over one's eyes, a strange thought crossed over my mind—Was he

going to poison me? I looked at him inquiringly, and he seemed to guess my thought.

"Could you," he said, with a sad voice, "could you believe me guilty of such a dreadful deed?—you whom I love so fondly!"

I did not let him finish, and at one draught I emptied the contents of the phial, feeling thoroughly ashamed of having distrusted him.

"You had frightened me to-night," I said, "but forgive me for the involuntary doubt. Good-night; God bless you, Mr. Barrington, and remember you promised to be my friend."

"Yes," he said emphatically, "and as long as I live, happen what may, I shall never forget you." And kissing his hand to me, he left the room.

The next day he was prevented from seeing me, through some unforeseen circumstance, and I was not sorry for it. I was afraid of having another scene; so I left the hospital with Dr. West, and was soon comfortably settled with those dear old people.

As one may easily imagine, I had grieved night and day since I was in England, and I am afraid I was not a very lively companion to have in the house. I did all I could nevertheless to appear cheerful before my excellent host and hostess, and busied myself much with drawing and learning English as fast as I could. My first visit out was to kind Mrs. Jeffrey's. I had paid her only a very small sum for my lodgings, and as she had often brought me fruit whilst I was ill, I offered to take her portrait, as the only return I could

make her. She was very much pleased, and thanked me as much as if she were in my debt. I did also two little drawings for Mr. Barrington, with which he was very much delighted.

A French pasteur used to come every evening, a M. de Courcy; his wife also frequently accompanied him; and I was very much charmed with them, although at first it seemed so strange that a priest should be married. In a weak moment I gave way to their entreaties, and soon became a Protestant. I cannot say that I felt much happier for it; however in the end it answered very well: there was little difference, I thought, in the prayers, and after all, as there was some difficulty in getting to a Roman Catholic church, I made up my mind to be happy in my new creed.

Young Barrington came, as he had told me, on the Sunday afternoon, and Mr. West said to him,—

"It is so fine, Mr. Barrington, you ought to take Madame de Léoville for a walk."

I accepted, not without a little reluctance, fearing some new outburst; however he behaved very sensibly, and I enjoyed my walk in the Park very much. We had a pleasant dinner; and his visit was repeated every other week, until we both left London.

"We have heard of something that I think will suit you," said Mrs. West, one day, "and although I dread your going away—for you have been a dear pleasant friend to have in the house—for your own sake I think it is better that you should do so. This house

will always be your home, my dear, as long as we live, so that we shall always have you during your holidays. Mrs. Henry Damer, Colonel Damer's wife, wishes for a governess for her children. I do not know her, but a friend of hers tells me she is a most amiable woman; and as she is now in town, she will call on you in a few days."

I dreaded going away, yet I knew full well it was necessary I should do so; and I waited in silent sorrow for the visit, which might end in my beginning a new and, I felt sure, most disagreeable life. Mrs. Damer came, and had a long talk with Mrs. West, who was the interpreter; as Mrs. Damer's French was on a par with my English. My good old friend settled everything for me, and in a month's time I was to leave for ——shire. During that last month of my stay, I had a long letter from Mademoiselle Giroux, which made my wounds bleed afresh. Then I busied myself in making all sorts of little trifles which I knew would please dear Mrs. West. The last Sunday I spent there, Mr. Barrington told us of his having definitely arranged to go as an assistant in Yorkshire; and as I had to go part of the way on the same road, Dr. West said he would put me under his care. I took leave with a heavy heart of my kind friends and acquaintances; and young Barrington and I took the coach early one morning, to begin a new path in life,—he, of his own choice—I, from direful necessity. We scarcely spoke during our long and tedious journey. We were both unhappy, and when

I had to alight, to get into the carriage that had been sent for me, he wrung my hand in his strong grasp, and without one single word turned away from me.

I had an immense long drive, at the end of which I was deposited at the hall-door of a very handsome-looking house standing in the middle of a park. Mrs. Damer and four children appeared at the same time at an open door; they all shook hands, and Mrs. Damer taking my arm said,—

"I must introduce you to my husband, and then we will go to your room, for you must feel terribly tired."

We both entered a handsomely furnished drawing-room; the Colonel rose at my entrance, and said a few words of welcome, and Mrs. Damer and I went upstairs. The rooms allotted to me were better than I expected, indeed, they were nice and comfortable. A bright fire burned in the grate; and Mrs. Damer said,—

"We shall have supper in an hour's time; but as you look very tired, perhaps you would prefer staying here, and the maid who is to wait upon you will bring you your supper. Do not think of getting up early to-morrow morning; your breakfast shall be brought to you. I hope you will like us all, and the place too;" and with these words she said good-night, and left me.

A quarter of an hour after, a tray was brought in. I ate little, and cried much, and finally went to bed, wearied, wretched, and praying the Almighty to call me soon away from this vale of tears and sorrows.

There were three girls and two boys; the eldest of the girls was thirteen, the youngest boy four. I had no taste for children; I knew not how to teach, and at first I thought I must absolutely give the whole thing up; but they were all exceedingly kind to me, and as I followed the advice of Doctor West,—always to remember who I was, and not allow any one to take advantage of my position,—I never suffered the slightest impertinence or disrespect from any of the inmates. I soon appeared under new colours, for I was looked upon as being excessively proud—an attribute which I had never before possessed; but I found it answered admirably well.

It would be too uninteresting to write much about my every-day life, as every one knows what it must have been. In a short time I understood my duties, and I soon became a favourite with the Colonel and his wife; the children I liked well, but always kept them at a distance, which however did not prevent us being excellent friends. Mrs. Damer was very considerate; she never asked me to take the children anywhere, for fear I should suffer from the, at times, impertinent ways of some people, who are apt to look upon governesses as regular drudges. However, I do not think any one would have done so twice to me.

As it is almost impossible to live without one's heart being engaged with some object or other, I, strange to say, took the greatest fancy to the little boy, with whom I had scarcely anything to do, and although admiring and liking the Colonel and his wife,

I discovered that they were unjust to the poor child. I could not imagine why, for he was nice-looking, amusing, and very loving; but he was always found fault with; the nurses followed suit. If Willie took the little man with him, and led him into some mischief, for a certainty Percy was at fault; this was the more ridiculous because Willie was then nine, and of course knew better. As I did not know much English, Mrs. Damer taught the children; the rest was entirely left to me. Mona, Adela, and Gertrude got on remarkably well, and Willie, as a rule, followed their steps; but poor little Percy was slow, which, young though he was, called forth complaints from his father and mother.

Winter set in with unusual severity. The snow had fallen for days and nights together, and the trees being covered with it, resembled white coral festoons, as it lay crisp on every branch and twig. In the sunshine it glistened like diamonds, losing the opacity it possessed in the shade. The ground was thickly carpeted with this wintry adornment; in places it was difficult to walk, unless a beaten track were made; still it did not prevent us going out, and I enjoyed the sharpness of the air, for to me it was freedom. I could breathe more easily, and think of him who had gone before me. How much I wished I could, like Mademoiselle de Hauteville, have marked a star in which, as the blue ether began to be gemmed with its millions of suns, I might have fancied my lost one dwelt!

Christmas came, with its festivities, so very enjoy-

able to children and to the light-hearted and happy; but to me the day dawned more miserably than usual. In France it is more of a purely religious ceremony than in England, and therefore there is less amusement. My recollection of it as a child was once to have been told by old Fanchette that if I awoke at midnight I should see, seated by the large fire, purposely kept that night, the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus, who were to be seen at every fireside at the same hour. Credulous as children are, especially of the marvellous, I had been delighted at the idea, and kept awake as long as I could; but sleep had closed my eyelids, and I had thus lost the long-wished-for sight. However, I had found sweets under my pillow and money in my shoes, left by the Virgin, which consoled me for the disappointment of not seeing her and her Babe. The year after, I had been allowed to go to midnight mass with my aunt; I think I never had so thoroughly enjoyed anything in my short life before. A gentleman, who lived a few miles off, had promised to send a conveyance for us in the afternoon, and when we arrived at his house, we found there were a good many people assembled at his hospitable fireside. The "Bûche de Noël," or, as it is called here, "the yule log," burnt cheerily in the huge chimney, and after a slight collation of bread and winter-salad —for it was a fast day until twelve—we sat round the fire, with the farm-servants and those of the house forming the middle of the circle, respectfully listening to the Christmas legends related by the

visitors, who blended at times their voices with ours, when the "Noëls" ("Christmas carols") were sung. Most of the peasantry, and I doubt not, many of the poorer classes, believed that the ox and the ass speak at the hour when our Saviour was born. One man had stayed away once from mass, to hide himself in the stable and hear what they said, though death was to be the penalty of it; he lagged behind the people, returned to the farm, and hid himself in the stable. The next day he was found dead there. This story had amused me exceedingly, and I should have liked very much to have heard what was said, for I could not doubt it; because in the fables I learnt, animals always spoke. At eleven we had started for church; the road being like a mirror, we all had list shoes over the others, and notwithstanding this precaution, many a tumble some of us had. The church looked very solemn, dimly lighted as it was. Three masses were said one after the other; they represent the eternal birth of our Saviour in the bosom of His Father, His temporal birth in the world, and His spiritual birth in our hearts. At the last mass the Holy Communion was administered, and to my intense amusement, I saw a row of about ten or twelve people obliged to get up all at once, and go in that style to the altar; some mischievous boys had sewn their clothes together. I had remarked in front of me several of them; and probably during the time people were bending their heads low, they had managed it. I thought it was great fun, and burst out laughing, to the great

indignation of my aunt; who however afterwards acknowledged that she could not have helped it, had she been a child.

As we descended the steep hill which led to the church, we saw all the little stalls brilliantly lighted up, full of hot sausages, puddings, brawn, etc., etc., which are sold to the common people for the "réveillon," or midnight supper. On our return to M. Desplace's we found a well-spread table, to which we did much honour, and went to bed in the best spirits.

On Christmas Day we went to high mass and vespers, then walked home again to M. Desplace's, where we remained till the day following. But "pour en revenir à nos moutons." On Christmas Eve the children had put holly and other evergreens everywhere, and they had all sorts of noisy games, in which all the visitors staying at Oatland Hall, joined. I remained for a little while, not to appear disagreeable, but soon retired to my lonely room, where I was left peacefully all the evening. When I went down to breakfast the next morning, all the good wishes of the season were exchanged, and when I returned upstairs to get ready for church, I found presents from all the family, which I certainly had not expected.

It was a merry dinner-party that day. We were about twenty. Two sisters of Mrs. Damer were there: one was married, and seemed in all things the very fac-simile of the Colonel's wife; the other, Miss Julia Annesley, appeared amiable; however, of her I shall speak further, and under very different circum-

stances, which showed her in her true light. Amongst the others was Lady Margaret Leslie, who pleased me infinitely, and with whom I formed a lasting friendship.

A few days after—I think it was New Year's Eve—they were all invited to the Rectory; I had been invited also, but refused, and remained at home with the two boys, who were not well. The nurse had gone for a holiday, and the little fellows, tired of the company of the under-nurse, came to my sitting-room. Having a bad headache, I feigned to be asleep.

"Madame de Léoville is asleep," whispered dear little Percy to Willie; "don't let us make a noise; we will look into the fire, and see all sorts of funny faces."

So they sat on the rug, and spoke in a whisper—quite audible to me, however.

"Percy," said Willie, "nurse won't be here; we must have some fun to-morrow morning."

"Yes," said little Percy: "what shall it be?"

"Oh, you know the pond at the end of the park?—it is all frozen over, and we can slide: won't it be jolly?"

"Beautiful, Willie; but Jane won't let us go."

"Jane will be asleep; you know she is so fat, she always snores till nurse wakes her, so that we can steal away without her knowing it."

So they arranged their plans, and when it was quite settled and they had talked on other matters, I pretended to awake. Percy jumped upon my knees and kissed me, and Willie said,—

"Pray, madame, tell us a story."

I was glad of the opportunity, and told them a tale about disobedience, in which two little girls were nearly drowned in going to slide on a large river, without any one to go with them, and so on. I saw now and then the two children looking at one another; then when it was finished, I went to my bedroom, which opened into the sitting-room, and I heard Percy say,—

"We must not go to-morrow, Willie; you see what dreadful punishment those two little girls got."

"Oh, but girls are not boys; besides, it was a large river, and the pond is very small; and you know, Percy, girls are so stupid they can't do anything; they are frightened, and they are always found out when they do anything."

I soon came back and said, "I wonder whether the pond is frozen thickly over?"

"Oh yes, madame," returned Willie, "it is quite firm, I am certain: Captain Meredith, Aunty Julia, and Mr. and Mrs. Orrell were skating on it yesterday."

"Do not attempt to go on it, mind, for you might either be drowned, or break your legs, or something of the sort; if it be fine to-morrow, we can go there together."

"Oh yes, do!" cried the little fellows; "it will be such fun!"

When they were put to bed I rang for Jane, and told her to be sure to lock her door and take the key for the children had arranged to get up

and go to the pond. She promised faithfully she would do so, and I went to bed. But I had forgotten that probably Mrs. Damer would look at the two boys when she returned, and Jane having thought of that, left the door as usual, thinking she would be awake when they came home; but she was fast asleep, and in the morning the two boys were wending their way to the forbidden spot. Luckily I rose early, and looking out I saw poor little Percy dragged along by his brother; I hastened to put my things on, and taking a shorter path through the shrubbery, I was a little in advance of them, and appeared before them just as they were rushing to the pond. The sight of their scared faces was intensely amusing, but I looked very stern, and asked them how they could be so naughty and disobedient. Willie hung down his head and did not reply, and Percy threw himself in my arms and said he would not do so again, and "Please don't tell them of me at home, for I know I should be whipped, and it was not my fault,—Willie made me come." The latter said he was very sorry; and after making them faithfully promise they would not do so any more, we turned our steps towards the house. As ill luck would have it, Miss Annesley had been a very early riser, and met us in the hall; she must of course hear it all, and she said to me,—

"I hope, Madame, you will tell my sister of it; Percy ought to be well whipped."

"What!" I said, "this little fellow to be severely

punished because his brother made him do wrong? I shall do no such thing."

"Well, I will then," she angrily returned; "you spoil that child most dreadfully,—he will grow as naughty as possible."

"What is all this about?" laughingly shouted Colonel Damer, accompanied by three other gentlemen going out shooting.

It was explained to him, and he spoke to the two boys, but poor little Percy got the worst of it, and he gave him a much severer punishment than to Willie. The three gentlemen tried in vain to soften it, and my poor little pet was in disgrace the whole of the day. I felt very savage with Miss Annesley, and from that day we never liked one another.

During the five years I remained with Mrs. Damer, we never had any annoyance, except on the score of Percy, as I could not tacitly agree to the opinion they formed of the child, who was incessantly punished for being dragged into some mischief by his brother, who, though a kind-hearted boy, could never help being disobedient. And when he went to school, something or other was always put upon the child. I therefore dreaded going away for any length of time, as I knew he would then be a perfect little martyr.

I generally went every year to dear Mrs. West's for three weeks, and finished the three others with Lady Margaret, who was most charming to me. No one ever knew at her house that I was a governess,

which was an immense weight off my shoulders; and I had always a happy time with her, only marred by the thoughts of my little darling boy.

To my great regret, Mademoiselle Giroux had also paid her debt to nature, so that I never heard about my husband's grave; I therefore took a few days, whilst with Mrs. West, to go back and look at it. To my intense surprise, the good woman had left a small sum to the gravedigger to take care of it, and I found it much prettier than I had left it. Nice shrubs were round it, and a perfect galaxy of flowers. I had two pretty white slabs put on each mound, and adding something to the gift of Mademoiselle Giroux, I left again, wishing it were in my power to stay with them.

The last six months of my stay at Oatland Hall proved very miserable. Mrs. Damer died suddenly, and Miss Annesley came to live with her brother-in-law. Jealous of every one, she had made up her mind to become complete mistress of the household, and gradually the servants, one after the other, left. She did not wish that any one who had experienced the kindness of her sister should remain in the house to witness her amiable doings. Her nieces did not like her, and the two eldest were always away visiting. We had constant scenes about Percy, as well as about Gertrude, who, not liking their aunt, both did their best to annoy her. It was whispered she wished to marry Colonel Damer, but I fancy she had taken the wrong way of winning his love.

Percy was old enough to go to school, and one day after a scene—in which Miss Annesley got the worst of it, for I did not mince matters, and it was in the Colonel's presence—I told him I wished to leave at the end of the year; a most exulting smile parted the aunt's lips, and she said that she had long thought it would be better. Poor Gertrude cried fit to break her heart, and my own dear little Percy was only consoled by the thought of his going to school on the same day of my starting.

Before my going away, Colonel Damer expressed to me his sincere regret at my leaving, and made me a very handsome present, making me promise that I would always correspond with him and let him know my whereabouts. My £100 a year I always saved, spending only the trifling sums I received from France. Colonel Damer had invested it for me, so that, receiving a good interest, I did not feel quite so dependent as when I had first come over; small as it was, to me now it was a fortune.

Dr. West had died within the last three months. Mrs. West had become very infirm, and as soon as she heard I was going to leave the Hall, she wrote and begged of me to come and live with her, which offer I accepted gratefully.

"I will not speak of any remuneration, my dear," said the good old lady; "I should be sorry if you thought of yourself here in the light of a companion: you shall not want anything, and all will come right in the end."

And so I took up my abode with my dear, good old friend, and led a most quiet life for two years, when she paid her tribute to nature, and I was left once more alone and in search of lodgings, as the heir had come to take possession of the house. Lady Margaret Leslie, who was abroad, wrote that she would come back very soon, and I should go to her; so it cheered me, and I waited patiently for her return. Mrs. Jeffrey had left London, so that she could no longer help me to find what I wanted, but young Mr. Auckland, the West's heir, was very kind, and soon found me a very nice family, where I boarded for the time being.

After the will was read, to my great surprise, £1,000 had been left to me. Colonel Damer, to whom I wrote, soon had it properly invested in the same way as the other money I had, and no longer did I feel a dependant.

Whilst with Mrs. West, I had my little Percy very often with me, for he was at school in Town, and to me he always came when he had a holiday. I even was allowed by his father to take him to France when I made another journey to see once more the grave which was the only remnant of all I had loved.

Many sad events had taken place in France during the years of my exile; the terrible Russian campaign, and the battle of Waterloo, so humiliating for the nation, were over. Poor Bonaparte was gone on his lonely rock, in Geranium Valley, where he was no longer to be feared by the European potentates. A

new era had begun for France—whether for good or for evil, the future alone could show. I knew that all my old friends and acquaintances would exult at the change, except however the Bonapartist ones. Poor Joséphine, how she would have followed the fallen Emperor had she been entitled to do so! But Marie-Louise did not avail herself of her privileges; and the man who had received the homage of kings and emperors was left to die uncared for and unloved, except by the people whose ties were only those of devoted friendship.

Peaceful and quiet as had been my life for the few past years, I soon found that I, as a rule, shut myself up a great deal too much from the outer world. I did not care for mixing with any one, if I could help it, and I soon found that however pleasant to me solitude was, it was not good, especially for the mind. When the eyes constantly dwell on the same horizon, the vision soon becomes contracted, and the ideas narrowed; I felt it most forcibly, and endeavoured at last to wean myself away from the small circle in which I had from time to time enclosed myself. There was one dear friend from whom I should have liked to hear now and then; but rarely had he written to the Wests during the three latter years of their life; and since they were dead, of course I had no longer a chance to know what had become of him; I mean Mr. Barrington. Perchance we might meet again, as we had met before; but probably we should both be much changed, and perhaps pass one another as strangers

would. How sad some of the retrospections of the past are!

An unexpected letter came to me one morning; it was from Lady Margaret, to beg of me to go to Charleville Court, to receive some friends she had invited; but that, owing to an indisposition of her husband, they were obliged to remain in Paris a week longer than they expected. I would fain have stayed in London a little more, on account of my boy; however, it would have been most ungracious if I had refused, and having had a whole day with him, I had to bid him farewell. Dear child! how miserable we both felt at the parting,—especially as he was going to a naval school, quite out of my reach.

Charleville Court was a most enjoyable place, and though quite alone for three days, I did not feel my solitude; indeed, I was almost glad of it. There I could in melancholy happiness weep for the ties that had bound me to one of the best men in the world, and which had been so soon broken asunder. I sighed over and over again for some of the sunny hours we had spent together, and even for the mournful ones that had witnessed the last moments of his existence. Time certainly had rendered the cup less bitter, which I had drained to the dregs, and when now and then held up to my lips again, I felt that a drop of honey had sweetened it, and fancied that no longer in life I could tread in the same sorrowful path that had shattered my hopes, and left me unloved. I knew that whatever misfortunes might happen to me now,

they would never resemble those which had deprived me of my husband, and I saw in every rugged solitude, that there was always a bright little floweret to enliven it, and however cast down my heart might be, there was still the memory of the bright past, to love and call my own.

The Earl and Countess of Brownswood, with their two daughters, the Ladies Maud and Blanche Effingham, and the Honourable James Boville, their nephew, arrived two days before the Leslies' return. I had never met them before, but they seemed very nice; and as with my somewhat recovered independence, I felt once more that I was among my equals, I received them with the same ease as if I had been in my own salons at the Hôtel de la Fère. Lord and Lady Brownswood were a perfect type of the English aristocracy. Lady Blanche was a superb girl—too much so, perhaps, to be very fascinating; and Lady Maud a great contrast to her sister, being scarcely beyond what one would call plain, but graceful and thoroughly amiable. Mr. Boville, with his fair hair, deep blue eyes and lively countenance, was the soul of the party; he was so amusing, so cheerful, and above all, so unselfishly obliging, that one could not help liking him.

With the Leslies arrived Mr. and the Honourable Beatrice Winton, and two days later, Lord and Lady Maxwell; to these were added the next day, Major Fitzgerald and Captain Audley, so that we made a tolerably large party. Pic-nics, drives, dinner-parties,

and evening parties, were incessant, and for a whole month the same guests remained, so that we became thoroughly acquainted with each other. The Maxwells and Lady Maud were my favourites there; also Jimmie, as we used to call Mr. Boville. He was a most curious mixture, and it would be almost impossible to describe him, for notwithstanding all his good and pleasing qualities there was at times—rarely, though—a great degree of indolence, much procrastination in everything he wished to undertake. His impressionable temperament made him often unstable of purpose, and I am afraid he often failed in moral courage. He did not like to face anything that would detract from his enjoyment. I heard him often say: "Please do not talk about tiresome things; I must enjoy life, 'coûte que coûte;' I could not go to sleep to-night if you worry me; there is time enough to think of what is disagreeable."

Blanche Effingham was desperately in love with him, and as it was not returned, the love of his beautiful cousin was very irksome to him. I think it must have been a fortnight after his coming, that one afternoon, Margaret Leslie had received an invitation for herself and half of her party to go to luncheon at Gleniston Castle; we all drew lots who should go, except Jimmie, who was not to be found. Blanche, myself, Captain Audley, Lord Maxwell, and Mr. Leslie remained at home. It was a most lovely day, and after luncheon I escaped to my room

with the intention of going to a quiet nook I knew of, in order to sketch a spot I had longed to do.

A small river passed through the grounds for more than two miles, and at one point dashed down immense boulders, and, when it had been swelled by rains, formed almost a waterfall. To reach it, a narrow path bordered with lovely trees had to be taken, at the end of which a kind of grotto had been built with rough stones; it was so shallow and small, that only two people could sit in it. On each side two immense weeping willows dipped their graceful branches into the cool stream, and shaded from the warm rays of the sun the occupants of this delightfully quiet retreat; whilst on the opposite side its glorious rays fell on the gorgeous emerald tint of the trees, which rose in an amphitheatre, and seemingly lost themselves in the horizon. Trout and other fish disported themselves in the silvery river, now and then venturing to jump out of the water to try and catch a passing fly. Thus engaged in looking at the surrounding objects, I remained inactive and thoughtful, until I was suddenly awakened from my reverie by light steps, tripping along the pebbly path. I could not see who it was, as the grotto wall projected so as to hide from one's view those who came; but I was soon in the presence of Jimmie Boville.

"Where do you spring from?" said I to him; "no one could find out where you were this morning."

"Thank God for such luck!" he replied, "and to tell you the truth I hid myself; I did not care to go

to the Vanes', unless you had gone, and I waited until I saw the party set out; then I was satisfied."

"This is very flattering," I said, "but fate might have favoured me, and you could not have gone."

"Do you really think I should have stood on ceremony? Not I. I would have mounted my horse, and reached the castle before you all."

"But you would have enjoyed yourself instead of moping here."

"Oh, that is your opinion?—well, we entirely differ on the subject. I don't mope where you are."

"Have you seen Lady Blanche since luncheon?"

"No, and have not the slightest wish to see her. You don't know, Madame de Léoville, what a curse it is for a man to be persecuted by a woman, as I am by my beautiful but unloveable cousin—so at least she is to me—when one cannot return the love; it really is too dreadful."

"Many a man would be proud of such love, methinks."

"I daresay many would, but it seldom comes to the right person; and the great misfortune is that my dear aunt and uncle have cherished the idea of my marrying Blanche for the last two years."

"You may change your mind, and become as fond of her as she is of you."

"Never! And pray listen to me. There is one woman I have met lately, and to her I have given my love. I never told her so, and whether she has guessed it I know not; I am almost afraid to declare

myself, for fear of a refusal. I prefer the uncertainty for the time being. What do you think?"

While he had been talking I had commenced my sketch, and during his last sentence I began to feel somewhat uncomfortable; however, I replied to his query.

"I could scarcely advise you. It must be very tiresome to be refused; and however great a friendship a woman may feel for a man, she may yet not be able to give her heart to him."

"In which case I suppose he had better keep his own feelings buried in his bosom?"

"That would decidedly be the safest thing to do."

We remained silent for a few minutes, whilst he knocked about the pebbles before him with his stick, and sent them rolling down in the peaceful river's bed.

"Well, whatever may be my fate I shall speak: Madame de Léoville, can you love me?"

A sudden rush of blood mantled my cheeks; I would have given worlds if he had not spoken to me of love, and the idea of marrying a third time seemed to me preposterous, even had I felt I could love again.

"Though many years have seen new flowers grow over the mould that covers my husband's grave, my heart retains still fresh in its recesses the face I have so much loved. No, Mr. Boville, I could not marry again. I am sorry you should have thought of me otherwise than as a friend; pray let us talk no more on the subject, and ——"

I had not finished my sentence when a splashing of oars was heard; the boat was skirting the grassy bank on our side, and almost immediately there stood before us the magnificent Blanche Effingham. I think her surprise was almost greater than ours; she eyed us both with a cold haughty stare, and said,—

"Pray forgive my having disturbed your *tête-à-tête*; I was not aware that the grotto was tenanted."

She had become as pale as death; anger and jealousy seemed to rankle in her breast; the proud patrician had not even the good taste to hide her annoyance.

"You have not in the least disturbed us," I replied; "we met here quite by chance, and I think we can make room for you if you like to sit down; Mr. Boville can lounge on the grass at our feet."

"Thank you," she replied haughtily, "two are company, three are none; I will go back from whence I came."

"Had you not better row your cousin back, Mr. Boville? She must be tired now; the sun is still warm, and it must be fatiguing."

"If Blanche wishes to wait till we are ready, I will do so with pleasure; if not, she must undergo the fatigue, if fatigue there be. I want to see how you are going to finish your drawing; I wish to take a lesson in shading."

These words had been lost upon her, as the boat already danced on the smooth surface of the water.

"Confound the woman!" he said in no gentle tone, "I feel sure she saw me coming here, and fancied we had made an appointment; you may depend her mother will be acquainted with it the first thing, as soon as she returns."

And so she was, for when we were at tea I saw angry glances thrown at me across the table from her lady-mother. Before we had left the grotto Jimmie had once more tried to make me change my mind, but seeing that I was as firm as a rock, he took one of my hands in his, saying,—

"Well, at all events, let us be friends, and forget what I have said, for I should not like to see you uncomfortable on my account. You can let me silently love you. When I leave here I shall go on the Continent, for marry Blanche Effingham I will not."

Hitherto the weather had been lovely, but a change took place; we had two or three violent thunderstorms, and rain set in for nearly a week, so that we had to provide amusements indoors. Mrs. Winton, Maud, and I, generally played billiards after breakfast with Jimmie, Captain Audley, and Mr. Leslie; after that we worked, whilst our slave—it was the name we gave to Mr. Boville—read to us, or helped us with our work; that is to say, threaded our needles, made our knots, undid what might be wrong, and so on. Blanche seldom or never joined us. She mostly remained with her mother, who I believe held me in perfect abhorrence. In the evenings, we acted

charades, or had a little music and singing; and as we stayed long at supper, it was generally late when we left the dining-room, and most of us then retired to our respective apartments. One evening Margaret came to my bedroom; she was laughing, and said to me,—

"Poor Lady Brownswood is in a terrible state about you. She thinks you are the cause of Jimmie not caring for Blanche. 'Just like all those abominable Frenchwomen,' she said this evening,—'and looking so modest and retired, withal; I have no patience with my nephew, to prefer her to my beautiful, my lovely Blanche.' 'Well,' I replied, 'I feel pretty certain that the Vicomtesse has never encouraged Mr. Boville; she has no intention to marry again, and you belie her when you say she is a flirt.'"

I was very much amused at Lady Brownswood's anger, and had no intention to change my ways to please her; so she had to continue her invectives against me, which however did not prove very fatal to me, as no one believed her.

Lady Margaret Leslie gave a magnificent ball before the departure of her guests; it was altogether a splendid affair, and the queen-like Blanche surpassed every one in dress, beauty, and haughtiness. But in vain did she try to attract Jimmie; it was no earthly use. He played the butterfly all the evening, fluttering from flower to flower, but I must say giving me every time the greatest share of his attentions.

"Look at our majestic Juno," he said: "she is

positively dying of jealousy, for I have not yet danced once with her."

"The more shame for you; you must obey, and ask her at once; and I wish when you have engaged her, you would introduce one of the Waterloo heroes to me; I am told there are several here."

"Yes, by all manner of means; look there is one coming towards us,—that is Colonel Kelly; he lost his right arm during the war. Here he is. Colonel Kelly, allow me to introduce you to Madame la Vicomtesse de Léoville-Meilhan: Madame la Vicomtesse,—Colonel Kelly."

We sat down and had a long chat about the campaign. I told him I knew the Emperor very well, and asked him whether he thought that the French had fought bravely.

"Without the slightest doubt, though fate was against them. But although I am an Englishman, I firmly believe that there was treason somewhere; I do not mean to say they would have won the day—far from it—but the Prussians came upon them unawares; they had been shown a path by a peasant boy, and thus they surprised Bonaparte. Moreover, owing to the badness of the roads, the artillery—upon which the Emperor greatly relied—was moved with the greatest difficulty, and these two things combined hastened the downfall of the mighty man, who had been the terror of Europe."

"Was it not said also that one of the generals had betrayed the Emperor?"

"So it was reported; however, no one, I believe, ever came to the truth of it. You see, Madame," he continued, "that I did not escape unscathed from the battle-field; but my life nevertheless was saved by an officer of the French guards. My right arm had been carried off by a cannon-ball, and therefore I was unarmed. In this terrible plight the officer passed me, and with his sabre was in the act of cutting off my head, when, looking at my maimed state, he lowered his sabre, then put it up to his shako and galloped away."

"I am glad, at all events, to hear of such gallantry from an enemy."

"Yes, and it would be a great blessing, if in war more humanity were shown. But men get mad; they seem to thirst for blood; and even those who are the most gentle and kind in private life, are sometimes, on the battle-field, more like tigers than human beings."

We thus talked long, and at last I was dragged again—much against my will—to a quadrille with Jimmie Boville.

"You have not danced yet with your cousin."

"Nor do I intend to do so. I hear that your name has been coupled with mine in the most unkind manner, and all through her, therefore she need not expect I shall approach her: luckily they go the day after to-morrow, and then I go abroad for years, until she is married, or has made up her mind to be an old maid."

They all went away on the same day, except Mr. Boville, which I think completely alienated the love of Lady Brownswood from him. He married three years afterwards a very charming woman, Mademoiselle Amélie de Barbançois, whom Lady Margaret had known on the Continent as a young girl. As to the fair and haughty Blanche, she married an old Spanish grandee, of first class, and carried abroad her pride, her beauty, and *ennui*,—for it was said she never knew how to amuse herself or be amused.

Lady Maxwell had made me promise to go and spend a few months in the Highlands, and gladly did I avail myself of her kind invitation, in which her husband had heartily joined. Margaret had made me promise to return to them afterwards, and having promised to do so, I left Charleville Court *en route* for Scotland. It was getting on towards ten o'clock p.m. when I arrived at the beginning of the estate, and delighted as I had been throughout my journey with the lovely views I had seen, I was still more so when, emerging from a lonely glen, we entered a wider road, where stately mountains—lighted up by the moon's brilliant rays—towered up abruptly from the pass below. Soon a long avenue of dark beeches succeeded to the road, and a few mihutes afterwards the carriage stopped at the massive oak door of the castle, above which the armorial bearings were heavily moulded. For a moment I gazed at the lovely panorama displayed before me with a sense of the most delightful enjoyment. The sea, dotted with number-

less islands, lay below a wide expanse of ground, unruffled and polished as a crystal mirror; whilst the silvery rays of the moon shed their lustre over it, as well as upon the gigantic chain of hills, that formed a background of indescribable grandeur.

There were several people staying at Mersington Castle, but as I was rather tired, I merely saw my hostess, who, after spending nearly an hour chatting in my room,—where refreshments were brought,—left me to take rest.

About eight in the morning, I was awakened by the merry tones of the bagpipe that were meant to rouse us from our slumbers. I was up and dressed very quickly; however, I found many of the visitors in the breakfast-room eating porridge, previous to enjoying all the good things spread on a hospitable Scotch board. Lady Maxwell introduced me to the company, composed of six gentlemen and three ladies, beside the hostess and myself. There was only one girl among us all, and from her I could scarcely take my eyes away, struck as I was by her appearance, which to me was excessively unpleasant. Never in my life had I seen such a strange head of hair: it was perfectly yellow, and curled up in luxuriant masses at the back, leaving the temples perfectly bare. Her eyes were a mixture of green and yellow; cat-like in their expression, and disagreeable to look at, unless she spoke, and then they lighted up in the most extraordinary manner, and spoke volumes; her features were good, though rather too sharp, and her complexion harmonized

perfectly well with the hue of her silken tresses. She was tall, graceful, and dressed in the best taste. The four young bachelors surrounded her, seeming eager for a word or a smile, and she freely lavished them around; though it was easily seen that for the time being there was one favourite.

Breakfast over, several of us went out, but as I was rather tired, I sat down on a hillock above a little dale, and taking a book, I began to read; but I was soon disturbed by the sound of voices coming from the spot below, and though unwilling to be an eavesdropper, I remained as if nailed to the spot, and heard the following conversation:—

"How long do you intend to prolong my misery? What can I do to please you? I have constituted myself your slave since I have been here; and yet what has been my reward?"

"You are too exacting, Captain Macdonald; and really, to tell you the truth, I must flirt—I cannot live without it; and I like to see all of you butterflies coming to singe your wings at the light of my eyes, and make each of you believe that he is loved. I think you are the one, however, who for the present has the most chance; so try and be happy."

"But I cannot be happy unless you give me hopes. Once you almost allowed me to believe I was loved, and the next day you spurned me, and turned to another, whose heart you broke: do you know that, Miss Charteris?"

"No: was it so? I really cannot help it; I certainly

know that more than one man has suffered from my indifference, which people call cruelty. Beyond a doubt I should like to have every man at my feet, and then cast them away, as children do old toys, in hopes of getting new ones: but what would you say, if I were all of a sudden going to turn over a new leaf and try to love you?"

"Then do so at once—do not torture me any longer; and promise you will wear this evening this bouquet of forget-me-nots: but remember, if you wear it, it will be a token that I am to be your chosen husband."

A prolonged silvery, but to me discordant, laugh, sounded in my ears.

"I cannot exactly promise the last request; however, take it for granted that I wish you to love me more than you ever loved any one before."

"I promise it most solemnly," replied the young man in a voice trembling with emotion. "Oh, Isabel, if you but knew all the love that is filling my heart to bursting, you would not be so pitiless! If you knew what visions, what fair illusions and enchanting hopes are mine, when in my waking dreams your fair image stands before me in all its glorious beauty, surely you would respond to so much love; for a love like mine cannot be met with every day."

"Perhaps not: and yet did you not say that Captain MacFarlane broke his heart for me? But after all, any sort of love would soon become tame to me. I feel I am born to sway over and be worshipped

by every man, whilst my heart remains untouched; for it is as cold as the icy frost of a winter morning, as hard as the marble under the chisel of the sculptor. I believe that my mission in this world is to hate, not to love; to wring hearts, and exult over it. And would you venture to link your life to mine after this?"

"Yes, for I believe you not. No woman on earth ever had such feelings; you are only jesting, and——"

Here I lost the sound of the voices; Captain Macdonald and Miss Charteris had got up, and were wending their way towards the house.

On returning from my walk I found Lord and Lady Maxwell and three of the guests at luncheon.

"This is always a very desultory meal here," said Lord Maxwell to me, as I entered the room, "so you will excuse our having begun; besides, this is 'Liberty Hall,' and no one is obliged to be punctual except at dinner."

Little by little all the others dropped in, and as I had finished, I got up and went to the window, to admire the view; Lady Maxwell followed me.

"Will you come with me to see an old pensioner of mine, who is ill? We shall have the sea all the way up to her cottage, and I am sure you will enjoy it."

We both left the room to dress, and when we were out I said,—

"Who is that Miss Charteris?"

"Ah, she has struck you already! She is a niece by marriage to Lady Jessie Dumbarton, who sat by you

this morning. She was left an orphan some years ago, and Mr. Dumbarton being her guardian, she came to live with him, to the utter despair of poor Lady Jessie. She is a fiend—that girl; she has neither soul nor heart; and were it not for her aunt, who is my greatest friend, I would not have her here."

I said nothing of what I had heard, and we soon changed the conversation. On returning home I went to my room, to draw from memory a very pretty bit of landscape I had seen; then the dressing-bell rang, and as soon as I was dressed I went downstairs.

Miss Charteris was already in the drawing-room, and alone. She came towards me, asking me what I had done with myself all day, and whilst answering her queries I took a survey of her person. She certainly was a splendid girl; and that such a black soul should have dwelt in so fair a body was almost incredible. Had it not been for her cat-like eyes and her tiger-like ways of moving about, I would have readily believed that all she said was out of mere bravado. She wore the forget-me-nots of Captain Macdonald in her hair, and a blue dress to match; her ornaments were turquoises and diamonds. Soon the gentlemen came in, one after the other, swelling the train of Miss Charteris, with the exception of Admiral Macpherson, who fell to my share.

Again the sound of the bagpipe was heard, marshalling us to the dining-room. During dinner it continued, playing excessively pretty airs. Miss Charteris sat opposite to me, having Captain Mac-

donald on her left hand. I watched her, and she seemed most gracious to him.

After dinner we ladies left for the drawing-room, and Miss Charteris favoured us with some songs; she had a fine voice, but did not play well. It was not long before all the butterflies entered, and the young Laird of Craignish came in for his share of flirtation with Isabel. Poor Captain Macdonald looked miserable; however, when Lord Maxwell called us into the ball-room, where Ronald the piper was already playing, we all joined in the *reels* and Highland polkas, etc.,—dances of which I knew nothing.

Baron Ardshield, of Ardshield, who was the best dancer, was kind enough to take me in hand, and very soon I went through the dance almost as well as any one.

"Bravo!" said Lord Maxwell to me; "you might be a Highland lassie, you manage it so well."

Miss Charteris had Captain Macdonald for her partner, but soon Craignish was the favoured one. Then they suddenly stopped, and as they were chatting in the recess of one of the windows, her forget-me-nots fell down. Craignish picked up the bouquet, holding it in his hand for some time, and evidently asking for it; her ringing laugh—more discordant to me than ever—was heard, and I saw her pinning the flowers to the button-hole of his coat. I looked for Captain Macdonald; he was leaning against the wall opposite to them; his face became ashy pale, he bit his lips, and a few minutes afterwards he came

to ask me to dance. Poor fellow!—I could see how miserable he was. He never exchanged a word with me, and his eyes were constantly fixed on Miss Charteris.

When the polka was over, he went to her; she looked at him in the haughtiest manner, probably refusing his request, for he left the room, and did not return again.

"I wonder what has happened to Macdonald," said Charley Stuart; "was he not well when he danced with you?"

"I fancy he is annoyed at something or other."

"Oh, I daresay he is jealous of Craignish. But what do you think of Miss Charteris?"

"I know too little of her," I answered—though I felt I knew a great deal too much—"to give an opinion; but she is a very fine girl."

"Well, she is a perfect demon. You do not know what she is among men. I took a great fancy to her; goodness knows why, for I don't admire yellow girls, and yet I could not for the life of me help falling in love with her; but when I saw what the fate of poor Macfarlane was, I desisted at once."

"Very right of you to do so; still you seem as devoted to her as the others are."

"I only flirt with her, for she is amazingly amusing; all she says is quite original; but I won't break my heart for her, I can assure you. She is in her glory now, because she is the only girl here; she did not quite relish your being a widow, though; however,

she told me this afternoon she did not think you cared for any of us, and you were not even a flirt. And it is well for you, as she would not mind doing you some harm. Do you know how many times she was nearly engaged?"

"No."

"Her first season was last year in London, and about ten men of my acquaintance thought themselves on the eve of being accepted. She then came to Edinburgh, and about a dozen of other fools had the same luck; now she has made victims of all of us except Craignish; I think his turn came to-night. Fortunately only Macfarlane and Macdonald have taken it to heart; as to Craignish, I fancy he will be as wise as Ardshield and I have been.

The great clock in the hall was striking the midnight hour, and we all separated for the night. When I entered my room a flood of moonlight was pouring into it. I blew out my candle and leant on the window sill, looking towards the sea that lay tossing beneath the blue ether of the vaulted sky. Oh, how grand that waste of water was! It seemed to mean eternity, as it stretched away in boundless mystery; it was like standing on the shore of some other life. How small everything seemed to me when I thought of all the past, and dived—in thought—into futurity! But soon all this was dispelled: two voices in subdued tones were heard at the window below.

"Never!" said Miss Charteris, whose voice I knew at once, "never! for I told you I cannot love!"

"Farewell then, Isabel Charteris; and in days to come, may you remember my words: you will love, and more deeply and passionately than others have loved you; but your love will be scorned, as you have scorned that of others."

Her laugh, which was always grating to my ears, ascended more bitter and more sarcastic than ever, and all died away in the silence of the night. When in the morning I came down, Charley Stuart said to me,—

"Macdonald has gone early this morning; he told me to remember him most kindly to you."

I looked over at Isabel; she was laughing gaily with Craignish. The Macphersons and Lady Baird had gone away, and were soon replaced by the two Misses Oronsay of Oronsay, their brother, and the Master of Gowrie. Flora and Alison were very pretty and amiable girls, and we soon were great friends; their brother was equally agreeable. But as to the Master of Gowrie, no man I had ever seen in my travels could come up to him; he was surpassingly handsome, and as charming as he was handsome.

"I have a note for you," he said to me, on the afternoon of his arrival, "from Macdonald; I met him in Edinburgh with poor Macfarlane, who is in a deplorable state. What in the name of fortune do they see so much in Miss Charteris?"

"You have only been here a few hours, and you are already caught," I said laughingly to him.

"I caught! Nay, nay, you do not know me if you

think that such a cold-hearted, yellow-haired, cat-like girl can ever win me: give me rather Alison Oronsay. Still I mean to have some fun with that golden goddess; I am going to make fierce love to her, and I only wish to goodness I could make her love me as much as poor Macfarlane loved her: would not I enjoy it!"

And as soon as Isabel came in sight with her usual train, Gowrie went to her. For the first time I saw her blush; the eyes had quite a different expression, and as she spoke to him her voice was unsteady. Charley came to me.

"By George, that girl is falling in love with Gowrie. We must watch her; what fun we shall have!"

"Who will come and see the Cailhac (old woman) of the glen?" said Gowrie; "I always pay her a visit on my arrival, for I am a great favourite with the old dame."

Except Lord and Lady Maxwell and Lady Jessie, we all agreed to go. Gowrie and Craignish walked with Miss Charteris; Oronsay offered me his arm, and the four others went together. It was a lovely warm day, and the soft breeze wafted to us the refreshing smell of the sea. Soon we had to diverge from the coast, entering an avenue of oaks, whose luxuriant foliage formed a leafy arcade; then we climbed some of the hills, and when on the summit of the highest, we all sat down on seats our gallant knights had made for us with their plaids. The view

was very lovely, and we lingered there long; then coming down we walked for some time under the shadow of the rock, cooling ourselves with the crystal draught of the spring gurgling down from it. The glen at last appeared, and the sun poured in a flood of golden lustre, which spread on the acclivities of the small hills rising up in dark shadows on either side of it.

We were soon at the cottage of the "Cailhac," who sat by a peat fire, though it was the height of summer. She seemed so engaged with her wheel, that she scarcely looked at us. But when she heard Gowrie's voice, she shaded her eyes with one hand, and in unfeigned delight extended the other to the handsome Highlander, addressing him in Gaelic. We all came to shake hands with her, but Miss Charteris stepped back.

"You scorn me, lassie," said the old woman, in very good English; "and so shall you be scorned by the man you will love more than your life. Your heart will be wrung as you have wrung the heart of many a bonnie laddie! Go hence, proud lady; the Cailhac of the glen spurns thee!"

Isabel Charteris attempted her ringing laugh, but it seemed to die on her lips, and she left the cottage with Craignish. We all sat down at the request of Ritchie, and were obliged to taste of her bannocks.

"You come from foreign parts," she said to me; "I will speak English on your account; for methinks you cannot understand our beloved Gaelic."

"No," I said; "but I like to hear the Scotch spoken; I can understand it. So please do so, instead of speaking English."

"I ken, by your manner, ye are a kind leddy, and also by yer een, and I'll speak the Lowland tongue, though I loe not the Lowlander."

She chatted to us pleasantly, and seemed to scrutinize our faces very narrowly. She told each of us a little about ourselves, and then we left her.

"I know a shorter and less fatiguing way to return," said Gowrie; "let us take it;" and he walked with me and Alison.

Miss Charteris was seated on the grass in front of the house. She had a bunch of heather in her hair; she had thrown away her hat, and seemed warm, dull, and tired. Gowrie went and sat by her; the rest of us went in; Craignish was in the billiard-room, smoking.

"By Jove," said he to us, "the Cailhac gave it to Miss Charteris; however she laughed and talked all the way home, though I could see she was very angry, for she begged to be left alone on our return."

"Gowrie is with her now," said Charley: "what will you bet he is the man she is going to fall in love with?"

"There is not the slightest doubt about it," I said, "and in a week hence she will be madly in love with him."

"During the whole week Gowrie had not left Isabel for a moment, and from her way of talking to him, he saw that she was most anxious he should pro-

pose to her, and she actually had acknowledged that she loved him; but alas for poor Miss Charteris!—at the end of eight days he deserted her for Alison, to whom he proposed and was accepted."

"Look at the lovely flowers that have been sent to me from Edinburgh," said Isabel, a few days after she heard of the engagement; "they are actually as fresh as if they had been just gathered, they were so well packed up. They are splendid exotics, only I cannot wear them; being scarlet, they would not suit my complexion; but for you, Miss Alison, with your dark hair, they will be just the thing; pray allow me to offer them to you"—and she looked at Alison as a snake would have done at its prey.

Alison accepted them; they were certainly very lovely, but I fancied they were a kind of euphorbia, excessively poisonous. When it was near dinner-time, I followed the young girl to her room, and told her what I thought."

"Shall I wear them only for a little while?" she said.

"You had better not. But wait, I hear Gowrie's voice, and I will ask him." I told him then what had happened.

"Please, Madame de Léoville, tell Alison not to wear them on any account."

At dessert Gowrie said,—

"By-the-bye, Miss Charteris, who sent you those flowers? Are you aware that they are rank poison?"

She turned deadly pale; then answered in her usual tone of voice,—

"I really don't know from whom they came, and not being at all well up in botany, I could not suspect what they were. I am glad you discovered it in time, on account of Miss Oronsay."

"She retired almost immediately after dinner to her room, complaining of a dreadful headache. The doctor was sent for; he ordered change of air. I fancy she had arranged it all with him, and she left the next day with her aunt."

The following year, as I was one day walking on Weymouth sands,—where I had gone with Margaret Leslie, who should I meet but Captain Macdonald, with another gentleman and two ladies. We shook hands, and he introduced to me the ladies, one of whom was his wife and the other Mrs. Macfarlane; they were both very graceful and pretty.

"Who do you think we have just seen in a Bath chair, and quite a pitiful object?" said Captain Macdonald.

"I do not know," I replied.

"No other than Miss Charteris! We bowed to her, but she turned her head away; you may depend she never got over her love affair with Gowrie; her heart has been broken at last. He wrote to me, and told me all about what passed, and also about the flowers. By George, what an escape we all had!"

As we were talking, she passed again in her chair. I looked at her; she was only the shadow of her former self.

After the visitors had left Mersington Castle, the Maxwells very kindly took me for a tour in the

Highlands, which I thoroughly enjoyed. We stayed with several of their friends and children, who were all married, during our journey; and on leaving them I returned to Charleville, where I passed seven months most agreeably, but without anything particularly to record, except that my dear Percy spent a month there previous to his departure for his first voyage, which gave me great uneasiness; I always fancied all sorts of terrible things happening to him.

In the spring the Leslies and I started for the Continent. I had longed to go to Spain, and there we went first; we were four years abroad. From Spain we journeyed to Portugal, and I think nowhere on earth was so much difficulty found to travel, with so little ease and comfort, or were the people so disagreeable; however, we were repaid by sights of great beauty and interest. From Cadiz we embarked on a yacht chartered by Mr. Leslie, which took us to all the islands in the Mediterranean and a few in the Archipelago. Then we went to the Holy Land, where even worse troubles than we had had in Spain overwhelmed us; but any amount of it was nothing, when we thought of all the grand and sublime scenes witnessed by the land we trod upon. We embarked once more,—this time at Sidon; went to Constantinople, then to Greece, where we remained several months; and we landed at Naples, after making a short stay in Sicily. We visited successively and in detail Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands, stopped some time in the North of France, through

which we had returned, as I wished to see my husband's grave; and once more we landed in old England, upon which I looked almost as my own country.

Many adventures had we during those four years of pilgrimage, but as it would take another volume to relate them, I will not attempt it, but end this with the last scenes in which the heart had the greater share.

Colonel Damer and I always corresponded together, and as Miss Annesley had died, I was invited to spend a month with the family, now reduced to himself, his old mother—whom I did not know—and Gertrude; the other girls being married. I found him very much aged, sad-looking, and altogether I fancied he was not happy. Mrs. Damer hinted at what had made her dear son miserable, and I truly felt for him, as I knew he was a good man. He spoke of Percy in very endearing terms; I easily saw that in all he had done he had been influenced by the opinion of others. From Oatland Hall I returned to Charleville.

Lady Margaret's health began to fail rapidly, to my great sorrow. We had been like two sisters; we never had the slightest annoyance together; and to see her fading away in the prime of life, as she did, was one of the sad events of my existence. I devoted myself entirely to her, but neither her husband's love and care nor mine were of any avail; she lived fourteen months in this state, and died re-

gretted by all who knew her. One more pearl of my ring had turned black; it had done so at the death of each of the Wests, and I had become so very superstitious about it, that I never doubted for a moment that some misfortune or loss would happen as soon as I saw the pearls change colour; two only remained unblemished, and I often wondered what could possibly be my next misfortune. But to return to Margaret Leslie, before I close finally about her. Scarcely any woman, in my opinion, could have come up to her. She was the standard of all that was good. A fond, devoted, and faithful wife she had been, and a model mother would she have been too had her children lived; but they all died at their birth. She was a most sincere and affectionate friend. Her charity in word and deed was unbounded; in fact, she was an ornament to her sex, and was as beautiful as she was good.

Mr. Leslie's sorrow was terrible to witness, but I did not remain long at Charleville after his wife's death; although he kindly offered me to make it my home as long as I wished. However, I knew the world too well to avail myself of his kindness: we should probably have been talked of; and a fortnight after my own dear friend's demise, I left with a Welshwoman I had engaged as my servant. She had been in the habit of waiting upon me at Charleville; she was a kind-hearted, devoted soul; I thought therefore I could not do better than engage her. She so often spoke of her country as being very wild and pretty, that it gave me the wish to visit it, and we soon were

on our way to Anglesey, her native place. I went all over the island, but could not find anything to suit me; I crossed over again, and about two miles off the coast, in——shire, I was lucky enough to get an exceedingly pretty house at a low rent, situated in one of the loveliest nooks in the country. It reminded me somewhat of the environs of Aix. And why had this long ago—I shall not say forgotten—unseen place so vividly risen up before the mind's eye? Because I had known infinite happiness there, and all the beauteous spots I had visited since my widowhood had never had any charm for me like that one; and the reason was simple: I had never known love in any of the others, therefore the impressions had not been so lasting. I firmly believe that there is an intimate link between people and things, or rather places. All that nature presents to the sight, whether in gloom or brilliancy, leaves a trace in our hearts which cannot be easily eradicated. The little cottage I had chosen was built on an abruptly rising elevation, and had for background a line of mountains whose dark summits seemed to blend with the sky. In front, but at a long distance, a small lake, peaceful, and as smooth as a sheet of ice, lay embosomed as it were in surrounding, well-covered mounds, overgrown with small shrubs. On the western side the sea washed the rocks, and its low moanings reached as far as my dwelling. On the eastern side the vegetation seemed more luxuriant, and partially showed a few habitations dotted here and there in uplands and lowlands. Several cascades

ran down from the mountains, losing themselves in the ravines and glens which surrounded this spot. I had settled there at the end of the spring, and nature, less precocious here than abroad, had not entirely appeared to perfection; yet I thought everything pretty, though to others it might have appeared melancholy. My household was composed of Parry—who was to me almost another Célestine—Jones, her younger brother, and a great St. Bernard dog, which had belonged to Lady Margaret. In dying she had made me promise I would take care of him, and I did so willingly, for he was a magnificent animal, and marvellously sagacious, as well as faithful. Margaret had bought it at the convent when we were there. He was my constant companion in my rambles, carrying anything I chose to give him.

My first walk had been to the lake, from whence the mountains seemed as if drowned in the firmament; the violet tints, which so often bathe them and soften their harshness, were lovely, and the whole landscape was reflected in its placid waters, all of which gave me ample scope for my paintings.

The sea, too—the ever-varying sea—was another favourite spot. To me there was more sadness there than by the lake. I often sat watching it, dreaming, and listening to its moans, as it dashed against the cruel rocks, or as it cast away from its heaving breast the weeds and shells, which fell at my feet with a soft murmur, as they rolled on the smooth sand of the shore.

It was in returning thence, that one day I saw a strange sight—at least, for that part of the world; abroad, especially in the East, it is an every-day one, but here I could scarcely believe my eyes. The gallop of a horse had attracted my attention, and as I looked up, I saw mounted on it a man apparently young, but with a long flowing beard and a thick moustache. He had passed so rapidly that it looked more like a vision than a reality, and I should have been almost tempted to think so, had not the same sight crossed my path afterwards several times.

One afternoon when I mounted guard,—for Parry had gone with her brother to the next town, as it was market day,—and sat at my little drawing-room window, the same well-known sound struck my ears, as it had done before during my walks; but instead of dying away, it came nearer and nearer, and in a few minutes longer, the stranger had dismounted, tied his horse to the gate, and reached the hall-door; which I went immediately to open.

"I hope I do not intrude," he said, gracefully lifting his hat, "but having had the pleasure of seeing you several times in my rides, I concluded you were the stranger who had taken this cottage; and being the nearest Doctor, I took the liberty of calling."

"Pray come in; I have also seen you often, and wondered who you could be; in fact, the first time, I felt very much inclined to believe you were the phantom of some hunter, for you seemed to be carried by the wind."

"I suppose my beard, too, astonished you; it is not the custom in this country to let it grow, but I find that in the winter it is a regular throat and chest preserver; and notwithstanding the dislike some of my patients have to it, I continue to wear it. I do not see why men should despoil themselves of their greatest ornament. Surely God had no intention, in creating men, that such a manly attribute should be done away with; women might as well shave their heads, too."

"I quite agree with you; but all men cannot boast of so handsome a one," I returned, smiling—and as the rays of the sun fell on it, there were such glowing tints that I had not been able to refrain from saying it—"it would be a sad pity to put the razor to it."

"I am glad you think so, and am much flattered by the opinion you have just evinced; but I suppose you have seen much of the world, and are free from prejudices."

"Just so; I have travelled far and near, and when in the Holy Land, I saw no lack of beards there."

He suddenly looked at his watch, slightly frowned, and said,—

"I ought to have been with one of my patients about a quarter of an hour ago: will you excuse me if I leave you so abruptly? I will do myself the pleasure of calling again very soon."

He rose, bowed, jumped on his horse, and lifting his hat once more, the sound of the horse's feet were

soon lost, although the mountain echo after a second or two returned them to me.

"Where did I ever hear such a voice?" I said to myself, "and see those eyes? It must have been a long time ago. Could it be?—yes, it must be Claude Barrington: it is his smile, his voice, his beaming eyes, and his—at times—abrupt manner.

"How changed I must be that he did not know me again,—he who never was to forget me!"

Ah, forgetfulness is alike for the dead and the living. It has been said: "L'oubli est une fleur que la bonté de Dieu fait pousser sur les tombeaux—" but I also fancy that people soon forget those that have disappeared, for any length of time, from their gaze.

Two days passed, and towards evening, as the sun was slowly hiding its reddish light behind the hills, the horseman was again at the gate, and Jones having taken care of his horse, he joined me in the garden where I was walking.

"Am I under any hallucination?" he said, after the usual greetings: "are you not Madame de Léoville?"

"I am; and you are Claude Barrington, my kind nurse, when I lay so ill in the hospital."

"How strange that we should have met again after so many years! I am so glad, for I never forgot you; and the other day when I called, I was going two or three times to ask you whether you were not my dear, long-lost friend."

We conversed much about the old days of our pilgrimage in life; his had been a very simple and a

very uninteresting one, and his last mistake had been to marry a woman he did not care for.

"I had been most unlucky in every way," he said, "and finally, being in a bad state of health, had accepted the offer of an old college friend to come here in order to recruit it. His father was the doctor; he had two daughters, and I soon perceived that the brother and the father wished nothing more than that I should marry one of the girls. Doctor Williams was anxious to retire, and he offered me his practice, giving me a hint at the same time that he would die happier if I married in the family. I was wearied of my existence—for I loved you still; and without the slightest hope of our ever meeting again it was all the same to me to live or die, to marry or not; so I proposed to the one whom I happened to meet alone one day. She accepted me at once, though I firmly believe she cared no more for me than I did for her; and it is now more than a year since I linked myself to one who is to me but a marble statue. We have no tastes in common; however, we bear with one another better than one could expect."

He talked long in this strain, and I pitied him with all my heart. I felt deeply for him—alas! that I should have done so! Surely solitude is not good for one, especially "la solitude à deux," when there is a third in the background, whose rights should not be forgotten.

The night dew was falling, and the full moon was sailing amongst the fleecy clouds studding the

ethereal vault of heaven. The silvery beams danced among the shadows of the trees and on the mountain sides, and we were still talking. Of what?—of love? No, whatever our hearts felt, nothing of the sort was whispered. I knew he loved me still, and I——I felt afraid to ask myself what such a rencontre in such a lonely spot would lead to. I had not forgotten the one gone to his eternal rest. I remembered him, the loved one over whose grave I had so often strewn flowers; I had wept for him whilst he laid in the cold sleep of death, and bitter tears had flowed from my eyes for years; but now there was less misery in my thoughts of him: time had softened my sorrow, and if perchance the word love were whispered to me, could I resist returning his love? Should I be strong enough to avoid him? Would not the witchery of being once more loved be stronger than the sense of duty? What should I do? What could I say? All these thoughts had flitted across my mind whilst he spoke of indifferent subjects; and I felt that notwithstanding the uninteresting words which fell from his lips, his gaze was upon me, searching, penetrating, as if to inquire whether there was still room in the heart—once broken—for him, who had not forgotten the bygone years. No doubt he fancied what was passing in my mind, and as if fearing to inquire for the truth, he remained silent. I spoke first.

"You often pass this way?" I said, not knowing very well what subject to allude to.

"Yes, very often; in yonder village is my dispensary, and there I go every day, as a rule; then I have patients even farther, therefore to go home I have to return the same way. There is a little guiding star for me at times, when it is dark and gloomy; it is at one of your windows, and last night, when flying through the wind, I looked at it, and wondered if you——"

He paused, then carelessly said, "What a superb animal that dog of yours is!"

"It is a St. Bernard; he is one of the best creatures of his kind, and so faithful and sagacious. Here, Bernard," I called to him, "come and make acquaintance with this gentleman; he is an old friend."

Bernard obeyed; he looked for a second at Doctor Barrington's face, wagged his tail, and presented his paw.

"We shall be friends, I am sure; I can see it in his eyes: will you come with me, and leave your mistress?"

Bernard went away from the Doctor, and came round to me to be caressed; however, when the former went away, the dog held his paw to him, and from that moment a lasting friendship was sealed between the two. And between us? Alas! it was the dawn to me of a new love; not a guilty one in actions or in thoughts—though I ought not to have loved him—but one as pure as that of the angels; it might have been called a mere friendship, although I knew there

was in my heart more warmth than is usually the case when that word is taken in its literal sense.

Day after day he came, bringing sunshine and happiness to my little abode—now to me a terrestial Eden. All was sun-gilded under his blissful presence. Oh, how much I loved him—though I never told him—how I worshipped every word that fell from his lips! And why so? Was he better than any one else? Was it for his wit, his handsome face, his cleverness, his birth? No; for he could not boast much of any of those things, and I wondered how I could have been so regardless of it all,—I, who had for so many years enjoyed the privilege of living with those who possessed so eminently those attractions. Then why did I love him? I could not answer, for to myself it was an enigma. It was almost like a first love: I guessed what things he would have fain said; but which ever remained unuttered on his dear lips. I fancied I heard them all, and they seemed to me to be as delightful as the light of heaven and as the first spring flowers; indeed, those hours passed with him were worth worshipping.

All the household loved him. Parry would always prepare something nice for either his supper or luncheon, in case he should come at those hours. Jones had made a sort of shed for his horse, so that the doctor—as he used to say—did not feel his poor horse was uncomfortable; and Bernard, good dog! he knew his steps, and even the time when he generally came. I saw him many a time in the hall

waiting to hear the kitchen clock strike two, and then he would go to Parry or Jones, so that they might open the door for him. The garden wicket he opened with his paw, and he would patiently wait till he saw Dr. Barrington coming; then like lightning he flew to meet him, and by his joyful bark I knew that my precious Claude was on his way to the cottage. At night he would do the same; but if something untoward had happened to delay him or prevent his usual visit, then Bernard would return with his head down, scratch at the parlour door, and look at me with eyes which seemed to say, "He has not come," and would lie down as disconsolate as his mistress. Dear Claude, joy of my lonely life, how I missed thee! How I yearned for five minutes of thy presence, and how sorrowfully would the hours pass, when fate ordered I should not see thee!

One must not imagine that this love made me bad: quite the contrary; for we never talked of anything but what could tend to elevate the soul. After leaving him I felt better; I could pray with more fervour when kneeling at night before the eternal throne of the Omnipotent. When we walked out, especially during the summer evenings, our souls, full of adoration for one another, felt attracted to the infinite, and towards all things which proclaimed the glorious power of God.

"Would you like any one to call upon you?" he said one day to me; "do you not find your solitude too much at times?"

There was a sort of fear in his looks as he uttered those words, and an unsteadiness in the voice, which made me feel that such a wish would pain him.

"I wish for any one to call!" I replied, "when the days and hours fly like seconds into eternity whilst waiting for happiness: do you not know that this peaceful retreat, this silence which whispers a loved name to my ears, this blue ethereal vault which lights up my whole existence, this solitude with you, and the complete assimilation of our hearts, our souls, and our thoughts;—do you not think this is enough happiness for me? I want another being to converse with but you! Surely you could never have thought so?"

"Thank God for it, then. I sometimes felt afraid you wanted society; but if you feel as I do—if without speaking we understand one another, then I know you are happy; we are sufficient to one another. Our sensations must be the same; our thoughts must blend themselves as yonder mountain firs blend with the silvery clouds which are now passing over them."

I could not answer him; I feared to say too much, and yet how my heart overflowed with words of adoration to him; he, my beloved Claude, to whom I dared not breathe so much as a whisper of love! We remained for a while mute under the delightful burden of our thoughts. We had sat on the trunk of an old tree which had fallen down one night after a hurricane; it was an intoxicating evening; the shadows of the mountain ridge displayed themselves fancifully before us; the cool cascade fell lazily down

its rocky bed with the softest murmur, and the rustling of the foliage, in the midst of which the light evening breeze disported itself, and the almost inaudible voices of the waves came to us from the far shore, and seemed to whisper to us: "revel in your happiness."

We could have remained thus for hours; but his duties were often imperative, and in the midst of our ocean of ineffable felicity it was often necessary we should tear one another from those thrilling minutes of mute delight.

At such times we seldom tried to speak; our emotion was too great, and the broken accents of our voices would have betrayed aloud what we inwardly felt. Often tears glistened in my eyes, and then he would hurry away, and the shadow of the loved image of my Claude—mine, alas, I had no right to call him—soon disappeared from my fond gaze. Then Bernard, who always followed him for a short distance, would come running back to me, and seem to share the regrets of his mistress.

Thus a whole year of unspeakable bliss, broken only three times by visits from Mrs. Barrington and her sister, and also by Doctor Williams, passed away. I scarcely knew which season I had enjoyed best. Spring, with its smooth, soft, sweet air, bringing hope, and whispering gently to all nature, "be happy." The spring colouring of the trees, with its emerald tints; the singing of the birds, soothing and calming to the mind, seemed to give us a new life; our hearts were full of

impressions impossible to describe; and as he sat by my side, when I was engaged in painting nature's new garb, a thrill of delight sprang inwardly in our hearts, and the soft green light, the delicate shadows, the bright gleams of sunshine, the low quivering of the leaves,—to us both it was also a new life, springing up again with a love still stronger than that of the past. Summer had had the same delights to us. Then brown autumn, with its dun leaves, its fogs spreading like nocturnal inundations about our valley, and falling in drops on the dead leaves, or glistening like countless gems on the short grass,—all these had a charm, though a melancholy one. Our evenings could no longer be spent out, for their blue and cool shadows glided rapidly on, unfolding in shrouds over the horizon; but in this, as in all the rest, there were delights, and as we returned to the cottage we found a bright cheering fire, and we talked in the dark room, only lighted up by the cheerful blaze of the burning coal, till the lamp was brought in, when he read aloud to me, or else had to leave me to go where his duties called him. Oh, then it was that the atmosphere around me seemed heavier, and that my soul pined for his presence, which ever, and at any time, was heaven to me!

During the winter, if possible, we seemed more linked to one another; our souls were not cooled by the winter frosts, our hearts not less loving; on the contrary, I think they glowed in unison with that of the flames: we loved more and more every day,

but we dared not let the word pass over the threshold of our lips.

My anxiety for him was also greater then, and it gave a fresh impetus to my heart's emotions, for he would come cold and weary, and I warmed his hands in mine, whilst he sat before the fire, almost frozen, his beard full of icicles—at times it was so; and then Parry would bring him something warm: and how I enjoyed to see him, little by little, recovering, and getting cheerful! Poor Parry!—she loved him as she would have done her own child. How well I remember the little silver service, given to me by Lady Margaret, always brought for him, because things kept warmer in it! Nothing to her own mind could be good enough for the dear Doctor, and I was often amused at the delicacies she used to hunt for, in our little town, and which she brought for him.

Mrs Barrington's first visit had been announced to me by her husband, and although I felt somewhat guilty in seeing her, she soon dispelled my qualms of conscience by the way she spoke.

"I am so much obliged to you," she said, after a long conversation about the place, "for your kindness to Dr. Barrington: he is not very strong, and after his long rides he often requires nourishment, which he never can get at the proper hour. So his being able to come here in a friendly way is quite a godsend to him; his health is ever so much better, now that he does not fast so long."

"I am delighted at it," I replied; "Dr. Barrington is

a dear old friend of mine; he saved my life, and I am only too happy to be able to discharge my debt of gratitude to him, in showing him every attention in my power."

Some, I dare say, will call this hypocrisy, though I really did not feel I was a hypocrite. The world no doubt would call me very guilty: but why had that love been given to me? I had not sought for it; I would rather have died than have committed myself in any way, only I must plead for weakness. I tried but little to fight against my inward feelings; I allowed them to grow like weeds in an uncultivated garden, but I firmly believe I caused no harm: his wife would not have been a whit better loved, had he not known me; and had he fallen into the hands of another woman, probably the same reserve that existed between us till the last would have soon disappeared.

I returned Mrs. Barrington's calls, as in duty bound, but I did not care for her much, and less still for her sister. The former was an ordinary woman in every sense of the word; pleasant-looking enough, but cold and most uninteresting in her conversation. It was no prejudice on my part, for Parry had often heard the same said of her. Miss Williams was plain—awkward, I thought—and talked a great deal of nonsense. The old father was far superior to his daughters, and he was welcome whenever he came.

New Year's Eve had come. It had been my second in Wales; but how different I felt from the former, which had been the harbinger of an entire year of

unclouded happiness! This time an indescribable feeling of wretchedness weighed on my heart; I knew that my felicity would soon flee from me, and burning tears fell from my eyes unrepressed, for I thought it would lighten my burdened soul. Dr. Barrington had not been, though he seldom failed, except through illness or over-work, and as I counted hour after hour, I thought I should break my heart with weeping and sobbing. Bernard seemed to understand me, and now and then looked up at me, as if he wished to comfort me. Poor animal!—at times the expression of his eyes was almost human; and as he sat in Claude's place by the fire (he always did when the latter was not there), I could have fancied that tears glistened in his good, faithful eyes. It was just ten o'clock, when the sound, the well-known delightful sound of the Doctor's horse was heard; Bernard jumped up, I opened the doors for him, and he was soon with his friend, jumping and barking most joyfully.

"I am very late," he said, entering the room; "I have had a bad case, and must soon return to it; luckily it is this way, so I thought I would come and spend a few minutes with you. But what do I see?—Red eyes! What have you been about?"

"I felt so depressed all the evening, I could not help crying. I loved the year that is now nearly gone, never to return again, and I wept for it,— it has been so bright and sweet to me!"

"And the next will be the same. We shall be as happy as we have been: why should we weep for the

end? Did it not come last year, and has there been a single cloud to obscure our sunshine?"

"I did not feel the same last year, but now you are here I will forget my sorrow, and be cheerful. As long as you are with me, nothing can make me miserable."

His stay was short. Parry ministered to his wants, and soon, in the clear frosty atmosphere, the clatter of the horse's feet was lost to my listening ears.

The first of January dawned brighter than I had expected, and I had a long visit from him; how then could it have been otherwise?

Since my retirement in Wales, I had written from time to time to some of my old friends in France; being no longer dependent, I did not shrink from renewing old acquaintanceship or friendship, as the case might be. Many were dead, and amongst them my ideal of a woman, Mademoiselle de Hauteville. Mr. Leslie was also dead, and had left me £10,000: the only pleasure I felt in receiving it was that I could now do as much good as I liked; and I immediately made my will, in order to leave one half of my money to my precious Claude and the second half to my darling Percy; in regard to the former, in case of his death, it was to be settled upon his child.

The winter passed, so did the spring, in the same way as the year I had wept over. Summer with all its brightness came back once more, but a sense of

desolation constantly overwhelmed me, except when he was present. Every day to me was as sweet as the first, when I had discovered how fondly I loved him. This unuttered love of mine was a flower which always had the same perfume. The beatings of my heart were ever the same; in fact, the more I saw him, the more I loved him, and the more blissful was my terrestrial paradise. Dear precious one!—he knew it all, he guessed it all, and yet never did he offer to break the barrier we had tacitly raised between us.

One night—oh what a terrible night it was! as long as I live I shall never forget it—I had had some terrible dreams, which portended direful misery; a misery which soon was to be fulfilled. In the morning, rather earlier than usual, Doctor Barrington called. He was overwhelmed with work. Since I knew him I had formed a very high opinion of his profession—much higher even than when I knew the excellent Doctor Joinville; for I could now appreciate that profession better, so grand when it is not coupled with cupidity; in fact, in the man who exercises it, if he has a good heart and much sensibility it must eventually become a virtue. Oh, how easily could I imagine the pleasure felt by his patients, when his sweet face appeared before them! It must have been like the reflection of Heaven, carried with his beaming smile, in every room his foot trod. I could scarcely help begging him to stop a little longer with me. "Do not go yet," I said; "I feel so miserable: I know not why, but it seems to me there is misfortune in the air. I cannot breathe

freely; my heart is oppressed. O Claude!" I cried—it was the first time his beloved name had escaped my lips aloud—"something tells me we shall never meet again!" He took my hand, and said,—

"Why such ominous thoughts, Mathilde? Do not give way to them: a few hours longer, and I shall be again at your side. Pray do not weep; you make me wretched. Good-bye; think of me, not in sorrow, but in joy; I shall be here early this evening."

He kissed my hands, wrung them in his powerful grasp, patted Bernard's head, and a few minutes had scarcely elapsed before he was out of my sight. Bernard had run after him for some distance, and returned, not joyfully, as was his wont, but with his head down, and came quietly to lie down by my side whilst I was finishing a portrait of Doctor Barrington I had begun a few days before.

The sun had set redder than usual; thick leaden clouds were gathering at the horizon; the birds were flying to their retreat; the waves dashed angrily against the rocks, and from my window I could see them with their white foam, coming like mountains, and retreating to return again with fresh fury. The wind moaned amongst the foliage of the trees; soon it rose like a hurricane, and the sky became black with inky clouds; flashes of lightning furrowed them, and the low roaring of the thunder came nearer and nearer. Even in my experience of storms abroad, never had I seen such a warfare among the angry elements, Peal followed peal, and the mountain echo brought it

back again in still more angry roars. Bernard was crouched at my feet, whilst in silent prayer I implored the Almighty to stay the fury of the storm. Though all the shutters in the house were closed, every instant the room seemed in a blaze. At last I called Parry, and asked her to sit with me; I think I should have almost asked Jones to come in too; not that I was frightened, for I had no fear, but I was almost wild with despair when I thought of the possibility of Doctor Barrington being in the midst of it, and I would willingly have heard voices to drown, as it were, my terrible thoughts.

One last flash, more frightfully bright than heretofore, one last peal,—and it seemed to die gradually away. Bernard had suddenly raised himself on his hind legs; a low unusual whining began: I saw his hair bristling up; he trembled all over; I felt terrified. All at once something like an ethereal cloud seemed to pass through the room; I was soon in the centre of it, and a breeze so slight and so gentle caressed my face, that I thought some spirit must be hovering about me.

"Do you not see anything, Parry?" I said to the pale and trembling woman.

"A cloud, a mist,—I know not what. Oh, madam, what can all this mean?"

Bernard was still in the same state: I looked at my prophetic ring,—one more pearl had changed colour!

"Oh, my Claude!" I exclaimed, regardless of Parry, "thou art dead!"

I shut my eyes and fell on my knees, whilst torrents of burning tears bedewed my cheeks, and like a shower, fell on the ground. I remained in this state for some time, and was only aroused from the kind of trance I was in by a terrible howling of Bernard; he was now near the door, and was making the strongest efforts to open it. Parry did it for him, also the hall-door, and with one bound he had cleared the wicket and was rushing madly down the road. I had followed Parry; the sky now was quite clear, a few white clouds alone chasing one another, as if in sport, after the terrible tempest which was to leave my heart desolate unto death. The pale disc of the moon was slowly rising, showing the ravages of the storm; trees were broken down, the paths were strewed with branches, and the deluge of rain had made them almost impassable.

Where could Bernard have gone? He was not very long, yet his absence had seemed interminable. He rushed back in the same way he had left, covered with mud, and howling in the most piteous manner, whilst in his mouth he carried a necktie, which I recognised at once as belonging to my beloved Claude!

"He is dead!" I said with a cry of anguish, "I know he is." And without waiting a moment, I followed Bernard, who had dragged me by my dress, and with him I flew rather than ran through the splashing mud and the inundated grass, till I reached the spot where I fell on the corpse of him for whom the fondest adoration had been created in the heart of woman.

Parry and Jones had followed, and were almost as

soon as myself on the spot. O mournful sight! shall I ever have it obliterated from my eyes? There he was, bareheaded, lying down on the turf by his horse, prostrated in the same way: in death more—far more handsome than in life was my Claude. The upper part of his body had not been touched; the lightning had only struck the lower part, which was completely charred; the horse had had the same fate.

With the exception of a small cottage belonging to a poor old widow, who inhabited it with her son, there was no other habitation for at least a mile off. Jones went there, and brought back a mattress, upon which the lifeless body of my loved one was laid, and the two men carried it to my own abode; Parry and I walking behind, and Bernard by the side of him whom he too had fondly loved.

There was no warmth for me in this July night; it appeared to me as wintry as my soul. The splendour of the stars was unheeded; there was no more yearning in my heart after the night beauties, which with him had evoked new sensations of happiness: all was chill and frosty to me now; my soul seemed to have fled with his to the unknown regions of eternity.

The body was laid on the sofa in the parlour, and I was left with him. I covered him up to his breast, and then, for the first time since we had met, I pressed my lips on his, now icy cold and lifeless. Tightly I wound my arms round his neck, I kissed his pale brow, his sweet orbs, which could never again return my loving gaze, his cheeks, his neck; and for hours thus

did I keep in my warm embrace, him who could no longer feel or know what boundless love had been mine. The only witness of my agonizing love was Bernard, who had disengaged one of my Claude's hands, and was licking it, as was his wont when he had been patted by it, and when we both enjoyed the delights of his cherished presence.

Parry came softly in, and asked me whether a messenger should not be sent to Dr. Williams. In my misery I had forgotten it was a duty that should not have been forgotten, so I wrote a hurried line to the good old man, and making a superhuman effort, I tore myself away from him, my ever-adored one, to busy myself in taking his cast. During my stay in Italy, Lady Margaret and I had taken lessons. I had done him once before, but I was anxious to have another for my bedroom, and also I thought it might please his wife to possess so true a likeness. Almost blinded with tears, I performed my painful task, and when the grey dawn appeared, the wheels of a carriage were heard, and Dr. Williams alighted. I related to him what had happened, with an assumed calm that almost drove me mad, and I obtained from him permission to keep Dr. Barrington until the day of his burial, promising not only a bust, but also a picture, which decided him in granting my request. Towards the middle of the day Mrs. Barrington and her sister came; I did not see them, and as soon as they were gone I returned to my task. Dear beloved one! his placid, sweet face did not change in the least during

the few days that his inanimate body remained in my possession. I never went to bed, but lay for an hour or so at a time on the ground by his side, and then worked again at his picture. But the fatal day when he must be removed arrived; Parry and I laid him in his coffin, which was strewed with flowers; then I took one last kiss, one last fond look, and for ever he was carried away from my loving eyes.

On the spot where he had been struck I had a mound erected, and on a small marble slab the words "Requiescat in pace" were engraved. A hollow cross was imbedded in the turf, so that it might be filled with water and adorned with flowers or evergreens all the year round. Luckily it was out of the public road, so that no one could disturb me when I sat there, to pray, meditate, and think. Bernard seldom left the spot, and when he did so it was to go and see the grave of our dear departed friend: he had, happier than myself, been able to follow the funeral, and see the last of our loved one.

Oh nature!—how cold I thought thee, not to mourn with me! How I should have wished thee veiled with gloom, and draped as a sorrowful mourner, whilst I sat weeping at the empty spot where my Claude had met with his death. But no; the sun still followed his brilliant career in the blue heaven, the silvery moon and the angel stars shone with their wonted splendour; the blue rippling waters of the lake danced playfully in the sunshine; everything looked happy and joyful: I alone, sick and weary, called in vain for the past to return. To the mountain

echo I repeated the beloved name, and it alone returned it mournfully to my desolate soul,—Claude! Claude!—and slowly in the bosom of its mountainous dwelling the last long whisper of Claude died away.

A few nights after my beloved one's death I had a strange dream. I felt as if carried away into space, and going up, up, on high, till I could see the earth no more; the regions of the clouds I had passed, and still on, on, I went, till I was surrounded by myriads of suns and stars, through which I flew like the wind. At last a winged ethereal being took me by the hand, and on again we went; then one of the fingers of my companion pointed to one brilliant spot, and soon I glided through it. The sight inside was so dazzling that for a moment my eyes closed, unable to bear it; but little by little I opened them, and—oh, blissful, ever blissful moment!—amidst flowers, looking like sparkling gems, two shadows were standing; one was my husband's, the other my Claude's; both extended their hands to me, and between them I sat, entranced with happiness. Our souls and hearts seemed blended together. Both the faces of my loved ones were beaming with pure joy and felicity; I felt that to me they were the same, my heart being equally wrapt up in both. On looking at my feet, a tiny fairy form sat looking up at me, with its little bright smiling eyes. "This is our child," said my own husband, with the same tenderness as in former years he used to look at me. I inwardly felt I was not worthy of so much happiness as to be reunited

thus with my own; but as I looked up, I saw before me in large letters these words: "You are forgiven!" and in one moment all I had seen was lost to my gaze. I awoke, regretting that so consoling a phantasmagoria should have been a mere fancy of the mind.

And now that I have recorded all that my life has had of joy and sorrow, I will lay down my pen. I have drunk of the bitter cup almost to the dregs. There could only be one more sorrow to me to drain it, and that would be if anything should happen to my dear Percy. God grant that this last galling drop may never touch my lips! Lonely I go on, with my thoughts buried in the graves of those I loved. My constant silent companion is Bernard; he understands me, though we do not speak. When I sit by the mound —recalling to me my beloved Claude—at the foot of the trees which have felt the heart-beatings of both of us; when I look with gloomy thoughts at the mountains, the lake, the valley, the clear blue firmament we had looked at together, when I hear the murmur of the wind, the rustling of the leaves, the buzzing of the winged world, and when I fancy that the shadow of Claude is sitting at my side and sees my sorrow, I feel that soon he will call me to him, because there is nothing more for me to do upon earth, and I can say with Schiller:—

> "Ich habe niemand—niemand—
> Auf dieser grossen weiten erde, niemand,
> Ist keine stelle—keine—keine, wo
> Ich meiner Thranen mich entlesten kann."

I have once seen his little child, and for the last time, as Mrs. Barrington was going to leave the place. Bernard caressed him; I believe he knew who he was; and when the faithful animal is in the house, I have seen him over and over again stand before the portrait and bust of Doctor Barrington, and whine away in sorrow for his departed friend. Sometimes I have put the picture within his reach, and he has licked it all over as he used to do his hands. My good Parry mourns also for him, and even Jones stands often at the gate, as if waiting for him,—he who is gone for ever from our sight.

Daily I pray for death, but it does not come; and my cry is, ever and ever, "Oh God, when shall I be at rest?"

THE END.

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APRIL, 1874.

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